

The Prince of Detectives in a New Role!

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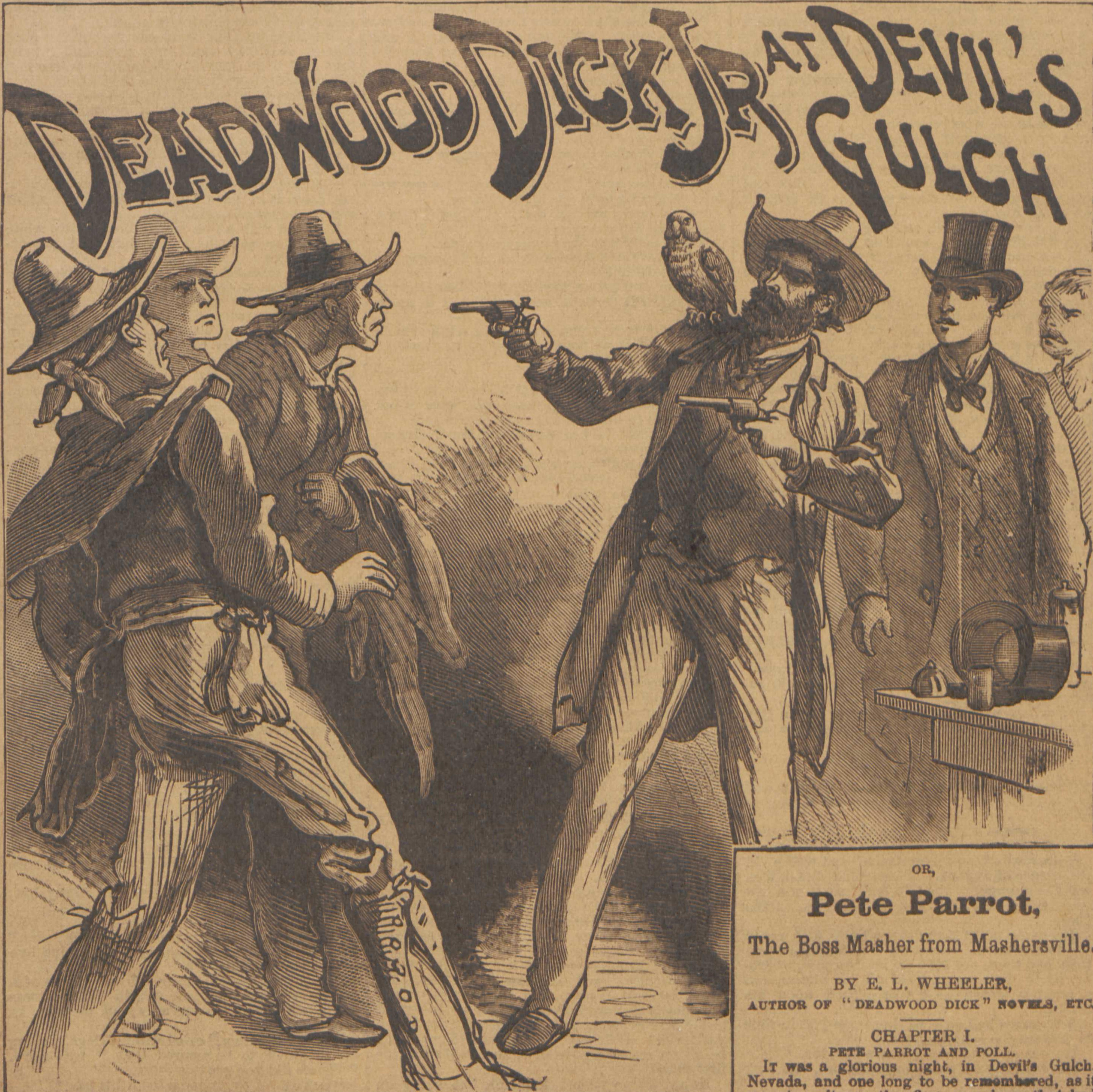
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OR,
Pete Parrot,

The Boss Masher from Masherville.

BY E. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

PETE PARROT AND POLL.

It was a glorious night, in Devil's Gulch, Nevada, and one long to be remembered, as it was to witness the first marriage that had ever taken place in the camp.

As Uncle Charley Copeland said, and he was

"BACK! YOU CUSS'D GREASERS, OR I'LL BORE A HOLE THROUGH YE BIG ENOUGH
TO RUN A RAILROAD TRAIN THROUGH!"

an authority, being the oldest man in the place, "Thar's goin' ter be a roarin' ruction in Devil's Gulch to-night."

The event was the marriage of Miss Nora Sage to her father's mine-superintendent, Burt Bradford.

Burt was one of the most popular young men in that region, and Miss Nora was one of the prettiest girls in all the State.

Samuel Sage, the principal mine-owner at Devil's Gulch, had been very successful in his ventures and had arranged that the wedding should come off in the best style that circumstances would permit.

Every one had been invited who was known to possess a white shirt.

A minister had been engaged, from Virginia City, to do the "splicing."

A brass band had also been engaged to furnish the music.

Samuel occupied the finest and largest residence in the camp, and it was surrounded by a spacious, well-kept lawn.

On this lawn a dancing platform had been arranged, and Chinese lanterns were strung about in profusion—which, for Devil's Gulch, was certainly a great novelty.

Mr. Sage had likewise brought a *chef* from Virginia City to arrange the supper, and had provided pounds and pounds of red-fire, with which to illuminate the grounds.

Pending the time for the guests to assemble, a number of the citizens were congregated in Three-Fingered Jack's saloon, bracing up for the evening.

Three-Fingered Jack was somewhat of a celebrity, having been born with only three fingers, on his right hand, and, truth to tell, he catered to the worst element.

It was especially understood that no one would be admitted to the Sage grounds, who did not have his hair and beard combed, his boots blackened, and wear a white shirt and collar, consequently, there was a lively demand for shirts and collars.

But Levi, the local clothing merchant, had only a limited supply, and these were soon gone; hence a number were barred from attending the festivities, and filling up on Sage's wines and "honest" liquor.

It was these "outs," mainly, who were congregated in Three-Fingered Jack's saloon.

"It's a durned shame!" cried Matt Green, "that we should be shet out."

"So it is!" echoed another miner. "It's all the fault of that infernal cuss Burt Bradford."

"No, I don't allow it was him," averred "Happy" Harry Harris, who ran the poker game and faro-bank in the rear end of the saloon, which, by the way, was known as the "Palace," although it resembled anything but that. "I've known Burt Bradford ever since this hyer camp sprung into existence, and I'll bet my boots he didn't have anything to do with barring any one out. It's all the work of Sam Sage's new wife, what he brought from New York last week. They say she was one of the fashion belles there, with a private fortune of her own."

"Oh! ye needn't stick up for Burt Bradford!" protested Black Ben, the bully of the camp. "Since he's got to be a mine-superintendent his boots ain't big enough fer him. For a drink of bug juice, I'd put a hole through him, that's how I feel!"

"You'd better not try any such circus," warned Harry, "for if you do, I'll have to interview you myself."

"I'm not afraid of you, Harris. I can lick you, and a dozen more like you, all at once, and don't ye forget it!"

"You can, eh?"

"Ycu bet!"

"Then, all you've got to do is to waltz in, and try it, right away. Now is as good a time as any."

This was the signal for battle, and in quick time the two men were at it, hot and heavy.

Both were of powerful frame, and well up in the science of boxing. If anything, Black Ben was the stronger of the two, and inside of a few minutes, he had Harry upon his back, on the floor.

The camp bully then drew a knife, and would no doubt have committed murder, there and then, had there not been an interference, whereby Black Ben was jerked off his victim, and a number eleven boot was placed upon his throat.

A stranger had entered the saloon just in time to prevent the contemplated crime.

He was an odd-looking character, too.

He was fully six and a half feet tall, and lank and raw-boned.

He sported a stubby beard of a startling red color, while his hair was jet black!

He was dressed in a suit of the veriest green, and wore a scarlet-colored hat.

Perched upon his shoulder was a large gray parrot!

His belt literally bristled with revolvers!

Truly he was an odd-looking personage.

And he it was who had pulled Black Ben from Happy Harry, and planted his boot on the big bully's throat.

"Ye gol-darned skinner, what d'y'e mean?" he roared. "Ye'd knife a galoot when he's down, hey! Sweet blizzard you be!"

"Let me up!" gasped Black Ben.

"I've a notion not to. Ye orter hev the etern life scrunched out of you. But, I won't. I'll reserve you for future exercise. You'll be just the sort of a cuss Satan wants to get hold of, and I'll give Satan his innings."

He then allowed Black Ben to get up.

Happy Harry was already upon his feet.

As soon as Black Ben arose, he left the saloon. Evidently he was glad to escape, for the stranger was big enough to intimidate any one, and evidently brave enough to hold his own anywhere.

Happy Harry advanced, and extended his hand to the stranger.

"My friend," he said, "you have saved my life. Whom have I the honor of thanking?"

"Dunno as thar is any honor about et!" replied the giant. "My name is Pete Parrot, and this bird is my partner, Poll. We've traveled together for years."

"Poor Poll!" screamed the bird. Polly wants a drink."

"Polly shall have one," returned Harry. "Here, bartender, give the bird a glass of water."

"Polly don't want water!" promptly declared Poll. "Polly wants booze!"

"Good heavens! You don't mean ter say the bird drinks liquor?" ejaculated Harry.

"You bet!" replied Pete. "When I hev a smile, Poll always joins me. Don't you, Polly?"

"You bet!" was the prompt response.

"Then we will have a drink, and proceed to see the weddin'!"

"Have you got an invitation?" asked Harry.

"Nix! Don't want any, neither, if I know myself."

"Well, I reckon you won't gain admission to Sage's grounds without a ticket of invitation," warned Happy Harry.

"Won't, hey?"

"I reckon not. It's goin' to be quite an exclusive affair, and only those who wear b'iled shirts, will be allowed to be present."

Pete Parrot looked down at his own flannel before he answered.

"Waal, I ain't got no b'iled shirt but I allow Poll and I will attend that weddin' and I'll kiss the bride in the bargain—hey, Poll?"

"You bet!" responded Poll.

"Poll knows I've a sweet tooth for the ladies, don't you, Polly?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" croaked Poll. "Pete, masher!"

"That's where your head is level, my gay and festive bird. I'm the boss masher from Masherville. All the gals git stuck on me, and I get love letters by every mail. Strange ter say, none of the fair sex can pass me by without throwing kisses at me."

The idea was so ludicrous that it created a general laugh.

Pete was so inordinately homely that no woman would ever have fancied him for his personal beauty. In the language of one of the crowd, he had a face on him that would freeze ice.

The drinks were ordered by Harry, and Pete poured out the raw liquor. Part of it he drank, the rest he gave to Poll, who seemed to swallow it greedily, not in the usual bird bill way, but by gulping it down, with a croak at every swallow.

"Well, may I never win another hand, if that don't take the cake, with biscuit included!" ejaculated Harris. "But, my friend, I'd earnestly advise you not to venture to enter Sage's grounds. He will set them Mexicans on you!"

"Let him set! He darsen't! Why, I used ter kill a Greaser every mornin', afore breakfast. As fer Sam Sage—well, if you want to see how meek and humble he will be, you jist waltz along with me, and see how I'll get in. My name is Pete Parrot, and this beast on my shoulder is my bird Poll. I've got another pard inside ther grounds, an' he aire all wool and a yard wide! Will ye come along? Thar won't be no charge fer admittance, and we'll sit at the first table!"

Happy Harry looked doubtful; but being an

all around sport, he did not hesitate v. he was only too delighted at the prospect of "fun."

He and Sage had played cards many a time, and he felt rather piqued that he had been ignored, in the matter of a special invitation.

"All right, I'm with you! Lead ahead."

Pete bolted from the saloon, followed by the sport, while several others of the company followed, to see how the man with the parrot would make out.

There was bound to be a ruction in Devil's Gulch, that night, as old Uncle Charley had predicted.

CHAPTER II.

WHEREIN MAGIC MOSE DOES A FEW TRICKS.

The grounds in which the Sage mansion was located had been specially laid out by an experienced landscape gardener, and rivaled anything in Nevada of its kind.

There were plenty of trees, and ornate shrubbery, and flower-beds that filled the air with delicious odor.

The house, too, as a piece of modern architecture, was pleasant to the eye.

The lawn was threaded with graveled walks, and the grass, always kept mown short, was as soft as velvet.

To-night both lawn and walks were well filled with people, in their best attire, and the broad piazza fairly swarmed with guests.

The Virginia City band was discoursing good music. A Punch and Judy man, and others, who had in an inexplicable manner gotten into the grounds, were "raking in the shekels."

Among the lot was a fakir, who was performing tricks of magic, before a mystified and enthusiastic audience.

He was about twenty-two years of age, and was as good-looking a young man as had ever shown his face in Devil's Gulch.

He stood five-foot-ten; was of muscular build; his face was of pure Anglo-Saxon cast; his hair and eyes dark and scintillant.

His dress was a fine suit of broadcloth, white shirt, collar and tie, a silk hat and patent-leather shoes.

He had established his stock of implements upon a common deal table, and was busily engaged in puzzling his audience with his sleight of hand business, when he was suddenly interrupted by Samuel Sage's arrival on the ground, in company with his brother, "Shorty," (Silas) Sage.

The mine-owner and the magician eyed each other for a moment, inquiringly, before speaking.

Samuel Sage was a man of large physique, was well up in his fifties in age, and was of rather overbearing presence, or manner.

His brother, who, next to Black Ben, was considered the best man in town, was short, heavy and cross-eyed. His visage was ugly enough in appearance to frighten a cornfield scarecrow.

"Young man!" said the elder Sage, "what are you doing here?"

"Amusing your guests, sir," was the reply.

"No harm, I hope?"

"Yes, a great deal of harm. This is no sideshow! Who told you to come here?"

"An old friend of yours."

"To whom do you refer, sir? I have no old friend who is authorized to give out invitations to my daughter's wedding!"

"No?"

"No, sir! And, the quicker you betake yourself from these grounds, the better it will be for you."

"How so?"

"Because if you don't go, I'll have you thrown out."

"Who will do it?"

"I will!" retorted Shorty Sage.

The magician laughed.

"Why," said he, "you can't throw anything out, you beer keg! If it wasn't for your rich brother you would be in the poor-house or prison now. If you'd take that hop-toad out of your hat, you will save yourself from a serious case of softening of the brain."

"Hop-toad? There's no hop-toad in my hat, you fool!"

"Take it off and see for yourself!"

Shorty grabbed the rather dilapidated "plug" from his head, and, sure enough, a genuine live toad dropped at his feet.

Shorty was just shaking off the effects of a protracted spree, and this sudden visitation was too much for him; with a cry of dismay, he turned and fled.

"This is deviltry!" cried Samuel Sage, picking up the toad, to be assured that it was alive.

"Where did you get this thing, sir?"

"Get it? Why, it came from his hat!"

"You lie, you mountebank!"

"Oh, ho; it is the truth; and to prove it, lend me your hat, and I will show that you are carrying around a worse lot of trash than that."

"In my hat, eh? Why, you impostor, there is nothing in my hat, except my head; and I'll swear to it. Look for yourself and see!"

And taking off his new silk tile, he handed it to the young man, saying:

"What's your name?"

"Magic Mose, or Moses Magic, whichever you choose."

"Who is this friend of mine who invited you here?"

"The Honorable Peter Parrot."

Sage started back, as if thunderstruck.

"Why, confound your impudence, Pete Parrot is dead!" he cried.

"He was pretty lively when I saw him last. But, hold on! Here is something in your hat. What is it?" and reaching down into the hat, he drew forth a baby's stocking!

The crowd, that had now gathered around, roared with laughter.

"Now, that is a nice thing to be carrying in your hat," observed Magic Mose. "But, holy Jerusalem, what's this? Where have you been tending bar?" And from the hat he produced two lemonade-shakers, and threw them on the floor to prove that they were tin.

Next he brought forth a nutmeg-grater, and then out came the photograph of a negress! The mine-owner was literally paralyzed with astonishment.

What did it all mean?

"This is infamous!" cried Sage. "You are possessed of the devil's own traps for mountebankery and imposture."

"Maybe so," replied Magic Mose, smilingly; but, for the love of Moses, my namesake, what are you doing with *this* in your hat?" And from the hat, he drew a half-pint whisky flask!

Sage uttered a howl; this added insult to injury.

"Give me my hat!" he cried, quivering with anger.

"Don't be in a hurry," urged Moses. "Maybe I will find something more. Why, bless me if it ain't gold!"

And he emptied out a number of ten-dollar gold pieces upon the ground!

"Here! the coins are mine," cried Sage, the avarice of the man at once asserting itself. "They came out of my hat!"

"Findings is keepings! If a man goes carrying a museum around in his hat he must pay a license, same as any other show," and Magic Mose deftly transferred the coins to his own pocket.

The crowd roared, while Sage made a rush at the necromancer, grabbed the hat, and turning, strode away.

But, he was gone for a few moments only, when he returned, accompanied by his three Mexican "heelers."

They were vicious-looking "Greasers," dark almost as negroes, and fully armed.

"That's the man, Pedro!" cried Sage; "put him out of the grounds!"

The Mexicans made a rush for the man of magic; but, they did not carry out their instructions, for a gigantic man headed them off, assisted by a pair of big revolvers.

"Back! you cussed Greasers, or I'll bore a hole through ye big enough to run a railroad train!"

It was Pete Parrot, and Poll was perched upon his shoulder!

The Mexicans slunk back, amazed and afraid. Pete Parrot then turned to Sage.

"Hello, Sammy! How you was! What kind of a jamboree hev ye got heer to-night, anyhow? Why, darn me ef ye don't look big as life, and twice as natteral! I'm mighty glad to see ye! And ye'r lookin' prosperous, too. Hoss-stealin' must have been good, down this way. Tain't good fer a cent, up North. Ropes are gettin' too cheap up in Montana, and trees, too, are flourishing!"

If the ghost of his grandfather had risen from the tomb, and confronted him, it is probable Samuel Sage would not have been more startled.

He glared at Pete Parrot for a few seconds, in speechless amazement.

"You alive?" he at last ejaculated.

"Waal, yes, rather! Do I resemble a corpus, brother Sammy? It's true I was hung once for horse-stealin', where et was *you* who stole the animile, but, after swingin' awhile, I got tired of the rope, and set out in search of you, who was so kind as to take a pull at the rope that lynched me. I believe every brother should look after the other one—don't ye, Sammy?"

"I don't know you, sir!"

"Oh! ye don't?"

"No, sir, and I order you to leave my premises!"

"Waal, now, that's cool! Maybe I've got a word or two to say about *that*, eh, Poll?"

"You bet!" echoed Poll.

"We don't come to a weddin', an' go away without seein' the circus, and gittin' a slice of the cake?"

"Not much!" uttered Poll.

"No, sir-ee, Sammy! We are here to see the show, and stay awhile. My mouth is all puckered up for a chance ter kiss the bride, and my pard here, Magic Mose, is in the same fix. So hurry up the ceremonies; and if you've got anything to drink, fetch it out on a silver tray!"

"I'll give you something to drink that you won't like!" replied Sage, venomously.

"Et must be some new-fangled beverage, then," replied Pete, "for I allow I've got outside of everything that was ever brewed or distilled, since Noah entered the ark. That includes water!"

"I will ask you once more, to leave!" cried Sage. "If you still refuse, I will set my bloodhounds upon you!"

Pete Parrot laughed; and Poll croaked "Ha-ha!"

"Why, darn yer skin," exclaimed Pete, "ye don't own sech an article. I'll bet ther ain't a dorg in the United States, as would live with you."

Sage, now more exasperated—and desperate, turned to the crowd, the most of whom were his own employees.

"Boys," he said, "I'll raise your wages ten per cent if you will fire these two loafers off of my premises."

This meant forty cents a day, for the majority of the men, and forty cents a day meant three glasses of "liquid glory." So the grand rush was made.

CHAPTER III.

A BLOODY AFFRAY.

"WHOOPEE!" yelled Pete Parrot. "Hyer they cum, like a thousan' o' cats! But, advance cats and give the countersign! Meow—Meow!"

And with this Pete began to shoot, right and left greatly to the dismay of the crowd, which quickly got out from the line of fire.

The effect was electric. Every man shot at lost an ear or was "winged," in some way and the air was soon filled with howls of pain and fear, while the assailants incontinently fled, followed by the entire company.

Pete Parrot and Magic were masters of the situation.

"Oho! we've left our trade-mark!" exclaimed the burly ranger. "Guess them galoots will know enough not to fool with a Montana simoom, again. What d'ye think about it Moses?"

"You are 'bout right," replied Magic Mose. "But, I reckon this camp will not be healthy for us any longer, the whole camp will be down on us, after this introduction."

It was a singular fact that not a man, except the two Montana pards, was to be seen on that part of Sage's grounds, at that moment. They had all taken refuge in the house or disappeared for repairs. Even the brass band "tooters" had picked up their instruments and skipped.

From all appearances, there would be no wedding, on the lawn.

In preparing for the festivities, Samuel Sage had established a free bar upon the lawn, for the use of his guests. This, also, was now deserted, and Pete Parrot and Poll proceeded to sample the excellent liquor from the Sage cellar.

"I hain't hit ont er sech a picnic, since Hannah died!" Parrot averred. "What d'ye think of it, Poll?"

"Bully!" squeaked Poll, who was gulping down her treat, like an old crone.

"Come and have a claret, Mose."

"Not much. I pay for what I drink," replied Mose, "or I do not partake. I'm no free-lunch tramp."

"I own this hyer ranch, and so give you a special invite, I do!"

"You own the ranch?" echoed Magic Mose. "Why do you say that?"

"By right of having been robbed of more money, by my brother, than this place is worth, or ever will be!" the gaunt ranger replied, decisively.

"Your brother?" echoed Mose, in amazement.

"Yas, my brother. Ye didn't know that that sucker who calls himself Sam Sage, is my brother?"

"How should I? You never told me you had a father, mother, sister or brother."

"Waal, now, that's strange. I never had a sister that I know of, and I won't take my affidavit that I ever had a father or mother, but I'll take my oath that I had a brother, ten years ago, and likewise two hundred thousand dollars, and when my brother disappeared, after leaving me hanging to the limb of a tree, the two hundred thousand went with him."

"And was that man Samuel Sage?"

"The one who calls himself Samuel Sage, but his real name is Parrot, and he's a brother to me and Poll, ain't he Poll?"

"You bet!" Poll assured promptly.

"What Poll don't know about the pedigree of the Parrot family would fill a book," added Pete. "This aire bird could compound a biography of the Parrot family, from the time of Chris Columbus, who brought over one of his ancestors. But, come along."

"Where to?" asked the young magician.

"Inter the house, of course! Ye don't want to miss a chance of kissin' the bride, and see the minister flop his wings and crow, do ye? Why, great humpin' hornets, that aire one of the features of the circus, ain't it, Poll?"

"You bet!" echoed Poll. "Polly wants cake! Polly wants candy!"

"Well, if you are anxious to venture into that house," said Mose, "and get your brains blown out, I am not. I may have a use for mine, in the course of time, if I take care of them."

"Waal, mebbe you are right, pard, but I'm goin' ter see that splicin' match, or I'm goin' ter bu'st! Great humpin' hornets! D'yethink Pete Parrot kain't see his own niece sent off? Waal, now I should blush to murmur! Eh? Poll, what is your opinion?"

"Cake! Cracker!" answered the bird. "Poll wants drink, too!"

"That's the talk! Cake, cracker and booze. There's no June bugs on Pete Parrot and his darter Poll, ef they hain't never leen to Congress! Aire ye comin' along, Mose? Better come. Thar's plenty of gals, an'—"

"The girls don't concern me," replied Mose, a spice of sadness in his tone.

Pete looked at him sharply.

"You're the durndest curious chap I ever mated with," he declared, solemnly.

"How so?"

"'Cause ye don't like the gals. Why, a good lookin' feller like you orter make more mashes than I kin, which is sayin' a good deal, ain't it, Poll?"

"You bet!" returned Poll. "Polly wants cake. Polly wants bug-juice!"

"And by the great humpin' hornet, Polly shall have cake!" declared Pete Parrot. "We will have cake, or will bu'st, and don't ye forget et. So come along, me bird of paradise, and I will introduce ye to the bride!"

And apparently reckless of consequences, Pete strode up the lawn, toward the house.

Magic Mose did not follow him.

He was bold enough but did not care to risk his life, when there was no occasion for it, and he knew it would be risking his life to venture into the Sage mansion, at that moment of anger and excitement.

But, Pete Parrot did not have that view of the matter, apparently, for he strode on up the lawn, and Poll screeched: "Poor Polly! Polly wants a cake!"

Just as Pete reached the veranda, which entirely surrounded the house, Samuel Sage came out.

Words passed between the two men, but what they were Magic Mose had no means of determining, except that they were not of a friendly nature.

The confab lasted fully five minutes: then much to the surprise of Mose, Pete Parrot entered the house, in company with Sage, arm in arm!

"Well, by the wonders! What does that signify?" Mose muttered. "Have the brothers made up, or is Pete and his Poll being led into a trap? I reckon I will wait around here, and see. Things look mighty queer, to say the least."

He retired into the shadow of one of the clumps of evergreens on the lawn and waited developments.

Presently some of the people came out; then the band appeared playing a wedding march; the bride and groom and the mass of the guests followed, but no Pete Parrot nor his bird Poll?

CHAPTER IV.

POLLY AS A MESSENGER.

THE band came first, with the exception that it was preceded by the minister from Virginia City.

After the band walked Burt Bradford and

his affianced; then Mr. and Mrs. Sage, and their invited guests, numbering over fifty.

The ceremony was to take place in the open air on the dancing platform, where rough but commodious seats had been arranged.

The bride-elect was a pretty girl: there was no getting around that.

Bradford was not exactly handsome, as the word goes, but had a frank, intelligent face, and one in which honesty cropped out, in every lineament.

"That feller is white!" was Magic Mose's conclusion.

And Mose was a pretty close judge.

In his pretty wide experience he had learned to "size up" character, and none knew better than he which was and which was not an honest person.

When the procession reached the platform the band ceased to play.

Nora Sage and Burt Bradford took their positions in front of the minister.

Samuel Sage then stepped forward.

"My friends, no words of mine can express the regret at the scene on the lawn to-night. I am unfortunate enough to have a maniac brother whom I had not seen before, for years. That he should turn up at such an inopportune moment surpasses my comprehension."

"However, he is where he will not do any one harm, and as soon as we can get hold of that young imp of a magician, we will make an example of him that will warn other tramps to give Devil's Gulch a wide berth. Let the ceremony now proceed!"

The minister from Virginia City began the Episcopal marriage service with impressive annunciation, but he was destined never to finish it.

There came the report of a weapon, near at hand, and the minister threw up his hands, and dropped to the ground, as if death-stricken.

The greatest consternation ensued, women fainted, and men became fearfully excited.

A general search of the grounds was inaugurated, but without avail; not a trace of the would-be assassin could be found.

Magic Mose, too, had disappeared.

"It was the accursed magician's work!" cried Samuel Sage.

"It was not!" replied Harry Harris. "I saw Mose start to leave the grounds before the shot was fired."

"Oh! you did! What are you doing here, anyhow? You were not invited."

"I was."

"By whom?"

"By your brother, Mr. Peter Parrot."

"He had no authority to invite you or any one else!"

"He took that authority, and so I came. If my presence is undesirable, I will leave!"

"It certainly is undesirable," replied Samuel Sage haughtily. "I want no gamblers or other fakirs on my premises, on an occasion like this!"

"Very well, sir, replied Harry. "Look you out, Mr. Samuel Sage, that you never set foot in my place again, for if you do, I'll take good care that you go out quicker than you came!"

And with this, Harris turned and left the grounds.

Just outside the gate he encountered Magic Mose.

"Who fired the shot?" asked Mose.

"Give it up!" was the reply. "You are the one who is accused."

"Am I? Well, you can bet I'm not in the business of shooting ministers. But, I wonder what has become of Pete?"

"I reckon they've got him caged, eh, from what Sage made known."

"It looks that way. We must get him out of the scrape, somehow, if possible—at least I must."

"Well, I am with you, my friend; so count on my help! He must be in the house."

"Yes, I reckon so. A high fence surrounds the grounds and there is but one entrance so they could not very easily have spirited him away. Think so?"

"No."

"Then, he must be a prisoner in the house. To secure his release we must, of course, gain entrance. But, how is that to be done? Blamed if I know. The fence is too high to scale, and besides that, the top of it is studded with sharp-pointed nails."

"And there is but one gate, you say?"

"That's all, and that is constantly guarded by one of Sage's cut-throat Mexicans."

"Well, a couple of them won't guard it any more!"

"Why? Were they killed?"

"They were marked for life, I guess, in that fusillade!"

"Well, I don't see as there is much show for releasing Parrot, until the guests disperse, and old Sage goes to bed."

"That is not likely to be to-night."

"Why not? The wedding will not come off, ter-night, I reckon."

"Maybe not, but there's plenty to eat and drink, and you bet the gang won't leave until the last biscuit is gone, if it ain't until next year! 'Bout the best thing we can do is go up on the bluff, and sit down there, until things get quiet again."

"All right."

"And if we succeed in getting your pard free, the likeliest thing for both of you to do is to skip!"

"Why so?"

"Because, to-morrow is election, and Sage will be elected sheriff without the slightest doubt."

But before they started for the bluff, which overlooked the Sage grounds, something occurred that materially altered their intentions.

An object came hurtling through the air, and screaming:

"Poor Polly! Poor Polly! Polly want cake!"

And Miss Parrot settled down on the shoulder of Magic Mose.

"Well, Polly, what's the matter? Where is Pete?" asked the magician.

"Pete gon! Pete gone; had!" croaked Poll.

"Ah! look here," said Mose, to Harris. "Here is a piece of paper fastened around Polly's neck. It's from Pete!"

"Pete gone!" repeated Poll, with a screech of eldritch laughter. "Pete gone. Poor Polly! Polly want cake!"

There was light enough from the grounds for Mose to examine the paper.

It was written in pencil, in a distorted sort of chirography, and ran as follows:

"DEAR DICK:—I'm jugged, and I reckon I'm a goner at last, unless you can help me out. I send this by Poll, in hopes she can find you, before I starve or am killed.

"Your caged pard,

"PETE PARROT."

Mose read this to Harris.

"He's a queer duck," said the gambler. "He don't seem to take matters uncommon hard, if I'm a judge."

"No, he is about one of the gamest men I ever parded with," replied Mose.

"Something must be done to free him, and that too, at once. It can be done, very easy maybe, but it must be done. I've parded with Pete Parrot too long to allow him to rot in a dungeon!"

"Pete gone!" repeated Poll, cocking her head to one side. "Polly wants cake. Polly wants booze! Poor Polly!"

"You'll get no booze nor cake," said Harry. "Come Mose, we better get away from here. There seems to be considerable excitement on the lawn, and I allow there is a movement on foot to hunt you down, and maybe me, too. The gang is getting fighting drunk, and from what I can see, old Sage is plying them with all the liquor they can drink."

"That means something!"

"You bet. He ain't dispensing all the good stuff, without an object. There's going to be more trouble in camp, before morning, and the best thing you and I can do, for the good of our health, is to keep out of it."

"You ain't afraid!"

"Tain't that. There ain't no use of spilling blood when it can be avoided. Besides, there's your friend whom we want to rescue."

It was good advice.

On the east side of Sage's house rose a huge bluff, that finally merged into one of the surrounding mountains.

This bluff was covered with low bushes, and afforded a good view of the lawn, below.

Here it was that Harry Harris and Magic Mose sought refuge.

The spot they selected was one where they could see without being seen or be likely to be discovered.

Down on the lawn the band was blowing away for all they were worth, and the men were swilling beer and liquor and coffee promiscuously.

Songs, shouts, and hilarity were the order of the hour.

Sam Sage had turned bartender, himself, and was doing the honors, not forgetting to honor himself with frequent tip glasses with his friends.

Burt Bradford had taken his affianced into the house.

"I reckon the whole gang will be dead drunk before morning," concluded Mose.

"So much the better. We will have more show of rescuing Pete," replied Harris.

"Pete gone!" assured Poll. "Poor Polly wants cake!"

"Well, now, you wait, my bird, and I'll buy you a bakery, with a gin-mill attached," laughed Mose. "How will that fill your eye?"

"Bully!" returned the bird. "Poor Polly wants booze. Pete gone! Polly go too!"

The two men were forced to laugh at the eccentricities of the wonderful bird, in spite of themselves.

"I was just thinking of something," said Magic Mose. "I wonder if we were to tie a message to the bird if he wouldn't take it back to Pete."

"Well, I hardly think so; parrots are not carrier pigeons."

"I know they are not, but Pete, Poll, and I have traveled together for two years, and he is about as much of a favorite with one, as with the other."

"Well, there's no harm trying, but I don't reckon you will have much success."

"There's no telling: Polly is a pretty cute bird."

"Perty Poll. Polly smart!" croaked Poll.

So while Happy Harry held a couple of matches, lighted, Mose wrote the following on a piece of paper, torn from his note-book:

"Yours received, by Parrot's Express. Sorry to hear of your predicament. Will endeavor to get you out of it, before long. At present things are red-hot.

DICK."

This note the young sport fastened about Polly's neck.

"Now, Poll," he said, "I want you to go right back to Pete. Do you hear? Go right back to Pete! Be off with you!"

And with this order he gave the bird a fling high up in the air.

The strange creature seemed perfectly to understand, for with a sharp squawk, and two or three turns in the air, she flew away.

"The most marvelous bird I ever saw," declared Harry, wonderingly.

"No more marvelous than the man who brought her up," replied Mose.

"You mean Pete?"

"Yes. He is one of the queerest characters I ever fell in with, and as true as steel. When I met him, it was up in Montana, just after I entered the detective profession."

"You are a detective, then, and your name isn't Mose, at all, I take it? You signed your name as Dick. Dick who or what, may I ask?"

"Dick Bristol, otherwise Deadwood Dick, Junior, at your service."

"Is it possible! I have heard of you. Glad to know you. What brings you here, Mr. Bristol?"

"Don't Bristol me, nor give it away that I am Deadwood Dick, for it would spoil my work here. Call me Magic Mose, right along to the end of the chapter," Dick enjoined of his comrade.

"As you wish; Mose it shall be. But, will you not tell me what brings you here?" urged Harris.

"No objection to your knowing, since you are in with us, Harry. I have on hand a most peculiar case, right here in Devil's Gulch," Dick answered.

CHAPTER V.

THE STORY OF HAZEL HOOD.

It was the break of day, fresh and pleasant ere Polly returned.

In the mean time, Magic Mose—as we must continue to call him—explained his mission in Devil's Gulch.

"I came here," he said, "to find an heiress to a million of dollars."

"Indeed? That ain't bad game to be hunting after, if one is handsome."

"Well, I don't claim to be that," said Mose. "None of the Mantell family ever was noted for extreme beauty, but, they always managed to get there just the same."

"Who is this millionairess?"

"Her name is Hazel Hood."

"No one in Devil's Gulch, by that name I reckon! and I know 'em all."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"But this girl may not be living under her own name."

"That may be true. But, I hardly think you will find her here. How old is she?"

"About seventeen or eighteen."

"Blonde, or brunette."

"Blonde, I believe. Her case is a most peculiar one, as you will agree. Years ago, when the Mississippi steamboats were nothing more nor less than floating gambling-houses, a man, named Jack Hood ran one of the biggest games on the river.

"He ran a square game; one day he was rich, but on the next day, maybe, he would not have enough money to open the faro bank or poker game with.

"Hood had a pretty little daughter, whom he thought the world of, and who was the pet of every one who traveled up and down the river.

"The boat on which Hood traveled was one of the principal ones afloat, and accommodated more gamblers' than any other two. Many was the man who lost his last red on board of her, and then blew out his brains.

"One night Hood engaged in a game of draw-poker with a man named Grant—at least that was the name he gave. He turned out to be a very game player, for he gathered in nearly every pot.

"Finally, both men got to drinking heavily, and this of course spurred them on to bet more recklessly.

"But, it had no effect to change Grant's wonderful luck, for he won steadily. Finally both got big hands.

"Grant got four kings, and Hood four queens. Naturally the betting now became hot and heavy."

"I should presume."

"You bet! Hood's last cent was in the pot, and Grant raised him again.

"There was so much at stake that Hood could not afford to back out."

"I should say not. Did he?"

"No! What do you suppose he did?"

"I haven't the least idea. What did he do, if bu'sted?"

"He put up his child!"

"Good heavens! And lost?"

"And lost!"

"The miserable devil! He ought to have been strung up. Did the other claim the child?"

"Yes. When he found that he had lost her, Hood fainted. When he came to, Grant had already left the steamer at Davenport, taking the girl with him."

"What happened next?"

"Well, the result of the loss was, that Hood blew his brains out. When the news reached Hood's wife, who lived in Cairo, and was worth considerable in her own right, she immediately set detectives to work to find her child—not only one detective but a score of them.

"Fortune favored her in so far that before long a foreigner came to this country, married the widow, accommodatingly passed in his checks, and left her valuable estates, that, on being sold, realized about half a million dollars.

"This profitably invested, enabled her to keep detectives constantly in search of her child, and amass a fortune besides!"

"But, they never found her?"

"No. There have been hundreds upon hundreds of dollars spent on the search, but all to no avail. Gerald Grant had utterly vanished, and the girl with him."

"Then what makes you think she is here in Devil's Gulch?"

"A dream."

Happy Harry burst into a laugh.

"Well, that's good," he said. "You don't believe in 'em?"

"Yes, I do believe in dreams. I have had a good many streaks of good luck, through following up dreams."

"How long have you been on this case?"

"Only about two weeks."

"Mrs. Hood is dead, eh?"

"Yes. She died a month ago. Before she died, she sent for me, from a friend of mine. So I went to see her. After ques-

tionsing me for a while, she wanted me to take charge of the case, and never give it up until I found her child."

"She also instructed her bankers to honor all my orders for money. So I took hold of the case."

"And you dreamed that this Hazel Hood was here in Devil's Gulch?"

"I did. As she appeared to me, in the dream, she was not unlike Nora Sage."

"Ah! Is that so? Well, that's queer."

"Yes, it is."

"Were you ever in Devil's Gulch before?"

"No, never!"

"And never saw Miss Sage before?"

"Never!" replied Mose.

"Has this young Hood woman any particular birthmark by which she could be identified, if found?"

"Yes."

"What sort of one?"

"She was born with a livid scar upon her right arm, just above the elbow, in the shape of a half moon. Rather a queer birthmark, eh?"

"Are you sure that this gambler's genuine name was Grant?" asked Harris. "He may have had an assumed name."

"Very possible. He went under the name of Grant, however, when he won Hood's child, and was known all along the river, as Grant. By the way, how long have you known Samuel Sage?"

"Oh! for a matter of about two years, I reckon. I first met him in Virginia City at the card-table. After that, I drifted down here, for reasons too numerous to mention, and I found him here, the owner of a mine."

"Do you know how long he resided here, before you came?"

"No, I do not. I should presume for some length of time, as his mine was well developed when I came here. Why have you an idea that Nora is the girl you are searching for?"

"Well, I've been wondering if she might not be, for she is like what I imagine Hazel Hood would be, if living, and she certainly does resemble Mrs. Hood."

"Well, if you think so, why not investigate the matter?"

"I intend to." Further conversation was here cut short, by the arrival of Polly who, with a screech of eldritch laughter, lit down on the shoulder of Magic!

"Pete gone!" said Poll. "Pete gone debbil! Poor Polly! Polly want cake!"

CHAPTER VI

TO THE RESCUE.

"WELL, Polly, did you find your master?" asked Mose, taking the bird off his shoulder, and shaking its glossy feathers. "Ah! yes! Bully bird. Here's another message from Pete, sure enough!"

And Mose took it from about the parrot's neck.

"That certainly is a most wonderful bird," declared Happy Harry. "When we get Pete free, I'll buy that bird from him."

"Polly want cake. Polly want a drink!"

Magic Mose proceeded to read the note by match-light, as best he could.

It was hardly decipherable, having been written in the dark, but Mose made it out.

It was as follows, in correct phrase:

"Come at once. Poll will lead the way. If I remain in this hole much longer I shall be eaten up by rats. There's thousands of them here, now, and I've all I can do to fight them off. I am down purty deep, so bring a rope with you!"

"PETE PARROT."

"He must be down in some abandoned shaft," said Mose, after he had finished reading the note.

"Yes, it looks like it."

"Is there one under Sage's house?"

"I don't know, but more than likely there is. If Pete is in such a fix we must get a move on us at once! But, Dick, do you think the parrot can or will guide us? Such a thing don't seem credible."

"The bird is astonishingly sagacious," replied Mose, "and I believe he will lead the way so that we can find where Pete is, even though we may not be able to get at him!"

Down upon the grounds all was becoming quiet.

Such of the guests as had not departed for their homes were in a maudlin state of intoxication.

"Even old Sage is drunk!" opined Mose.

"You bet! He always looks out for his guzzle," replied Harry. "It will soon be sun-up. So we had better make a start."

"You are right," replied Mose. "Now, Polly, show us w'ere your master is!" and taking the bird from his shoulder Dick dropped her upon the ground before him.

"Go ahead, Poll!" and he urged her along with his foot. "Go to Pete!"

With a flop of her wings and a series of croaks Polly started off in a kind of hop, skip and jump gait that was comical to see, the two men following close behind.

She led the way to the rear of the Sage residence. In the rear the fence was high and strong, but one of the tough oaken boards chanced to be down, leaving a vacant space big enough for a man to squeeze through.

The trio were soon inside the grounds.

"You remain here, by the fence!" suggested Magic Mose, "while I reconnoiter. It won't do to go at this work in a bungling fashion!"

The reconnaissance did not last long.

Every one on the lawn was found to be in a maudlin state of intoxication, even to Samuel Sage, who lay outstretched upon the grass.

"Now is our time," said Mose.

By this time it was broad daylight, and the sun-rays were beginning to gild the mountain-tops.

So he returned to where he had left Harris and the bird, to find Harry in a state of perplexity.

"Thank God you are back," he said. "I want you to explain a mystery."

"If I can, yes. What is it?"

For answer, Harry handed the detective a slip of paper, on which was written the following:

"Twenty days more, for you!"

"Now, that is consoling, isn't it?" remarked the boss gambler of Devil's Gulch.

"Why yes. Where did you get such a love letter?"

"You tell me, and I'll tell you. I felt a pin sticking in my back, and reaching around, pulled it out with this paper attached to it. How it came there is more than I can tell you."

"Well," said Mose, after he had examined it "it looks as if some one had rather got it in for you!"

"But, I have no enemies here," Harris urged. "But, how did you find things on the lawn?"

"Every mother's son of them drunk, Sage included."

"Then now is our time to move. Will the parrot guide us any further?"

"Yes, I think so. I reckon she will know just what is wanted. Go ahead, Polly! Go to Pete!" he ordered.

"Polly want drink!" said the parrot.

Harry scratched his head.

"Well, I don't like to swear," he said, "but I will be blowed if any one can convince me that that is a parrot. It is a bird, I will acknowledge, but it knows more than birds are supposed to know."

Polly got her drink—just enough to "wet

her whistle," then strutted off toward the house, the two men again following closely.

In the rear of the house was a shanty, built of oak. It was evidently used for the winter storage of fuel. The door was open and through this door Polly conducted her party.

"Pete gone!" she said, perching herself on top of a big dry-goods box. "Pete gone—debbil!" with a queer croak.

"Well, I reckon he has gone somewhere very near to where his Majesty hangs out," said Mose. "Cast your eyes about you, Harry, and see what you can make out."

The bottom of the shanty was simply earth, there being no other floor.

Nor did there appear to be any signs of the mouth of an abandoned shaft in the place.

"Polly has made a muss of the lead this time," said Magic Mose.

"Ha-ha! ha!" croaked the bird. "Pete in box. Ha-ha-ha!"

"Oh, that's the case is it?" and at once the big box was lifted aside disclosing a big barrel-sized opening, that appeared to extend down into the very bowels of the earth. Where it went to, the two men could not conceive. Did it lead into a subterranean cavern, or a mine?

They must know, that was certain.

"Now, the next thing is a rope," said Mose, "but where will we get it?"

"I think I can find just what we need," replied Harry, "over at Miller's. You wait here. It won't take me long."

Harry set off in search of the rope.

In the mean time, Dick held Poll over the hole.

"Pete down there, Poll?" he asked.

"Ha-ha-ha! Pete gone debbil!" was the answer, which Dick perfectly understood.

"All right!" returned Mose; "you go debble too; tell Pete, Mose is coming!" and with that he dropped Poll into the darkness of the well.

The bird did not return, and it only remained for Mose to sit on the box and await the arrival of Harry Harris.

The latter came, with the rope, in about half an hour.

"I had a deuce of a time finding it," he said, "and a deuce of a time in getting back here."

"How so?"

"The men are beginning to recover from their drunk, and are ransacking the town in search of us, and they swear they will string us both up, when they get us."

"Well, they haven't got us, yet!"

"But, there is no telling how soon they may have us. But, where is Poll?"

"Down the shaft. I dropped her down and she has not returned."

"Well, now we must work lively. Let us fasten the rope to something, and go down. I brought my little pocket lantern to light the way."

"Good idea. We will need it."

They then set to work. One end of the rope was fastened to a post; the other end was made fast to a piece of rock and dropped down the shaft.

The stout line was perhaps two hundred feet long, yet it did not appear to reach bottom.

"I don't know about this," said Harris. "If that rope don't touch bottom, we may have struck a new route to China. Are you any good on the climb, Dick?"

"Well, I can climb a tree, but I don't know how I'd do on a rope. I rather think you had better go first. You can probably do better than I. Here is a silver whistle. If everything is all right when you strike bottom, toot the whistle. And if you ain't so far down but what you can make me hear, shout back and let me know whether you are in Hades or Hong Kong."

"All right. I guess it is a matter of little difference which. I reckon one place

is about as good as the other," the gambler replied.

Then seizing the rope, he dropped down into the pit of darkness, taking the lantern with him, fastened to his belt.

Thus Magic Mose was able to keep him in view, as he glided down the line, until the light became the veriest speck and finally vanished from his sight, altogether.

"Well, he's gone," muttered Mose, "and from all appearances, he has gone the full length of the rope and dropped off," for, on testing the rope, he found that it was not taut!

"Well, he must have touched bottom somewhere. But, whether dead or alive is hard to say."

The minutes passed rapidly, but still no report came from the adventurer.

Mose now began to feel somewhat worried.

"It's strange I don't hear from him," he said to himself. "I surely could hear him if he was not down more than two hundred feet. If I don't hear from him pretty soon I will go down myself."

That pretty soon lasted for several minutes. Then, Mose got tired of waiting.

"There must be something the matter!" he decided. "I can't wait here any longer, so I reckon I'll go down, too."

His conclusion that he would not longer remain at the shanty was made urgent from the fact that he had heard an angry mob of people approaching.

Had they discovered his and Harry's presence there? or were they coming after Pete Parrot, to take him out and lynch him?

The latter seemed to be the most probable theory; so Mose considered it advisable to "git up and git!"

Seizing the rope he quickly disappeared in the darkness below.

The wall of the shaft was slimy and the damp seemed to penetrate through every pore of the body of Magic Mose.

But he soon realized that he was near the end of the rope.

What was below him? More space? or water, or rough rocks?

There was nothing but inky darkness everywhere, and the air was very oppressive.

Mose gripped the cord tighter, and descended as slowly as possible.

As he glided down, inch by inch, a number of theories flashed across his mind.

There must be some other outlet to the place below, other than the narrow shaft or ventilator, as it might prove to be.

If there was not some other outlet, how had Mose's and Pete's communications reached one another? Certainly, Poll could not have lifted the box off the hole, and replaced it again?

This gave Magic Mose a new confidence, and when he reached the end of the rope, he hesitated but a moment, and then dropped!

Down! down! down!

It seemed as if he was going to China, surely enough!

Then the stop came for he had landed in a pool of water, waist deep, but all around was utter darkness.

It was certainly a gloomy outlook for Magic Mose.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNDERGROUND SEA.

JUST what to do, Mose did not know. The water in which he stood was quite uncomfortable to remain in for any length of time, as it was of high temperature!

"I reckon I'll be parboiled, if I remain here!" Mose muttered. "But what shall I do—how get out—where go? Yes, where am I at?" he muttered with grim humor.

He suddenly bethought himself that he had some matches in his side vest pocket.

If these were dry, he could see his surroundings for a short space of time.

Examination proved that they were dry, and he ignited one, by scratching it on his hat.

By the light this afforded he was able to see around him.

He found that he was in a subterranean lake or reservoir.

The cavern, if such it might be termed, was a mammoth one, apparently, with a high vaulted ceiling.

At one side of the cavern, there appeared to be an opening through which waters made their way and evidently found an outlet.

Mose's stock of matches was limited, but would last several minutes, so keeping one after another lighted, he waded toward this opening.

As he advanced, the water decreased in warmth, proving that the cavern must be fed by a boiling spring.

On reaching the outlet, Mose found before him a long passage.

Entering this, he waded along as fast as possible.

The water grew less in depth, and finally ended, altogether, as if sinking into some underneath channel, through crevices in the rock.

"Out of the swim, at last!" Mose muttered. "And if I am not greatly mistaken, this passage leads to liberty."

He started forward to explore further, and directly on rounding a curve in this under-earth hall, Mose caught a glimmer of light ahead.

It was not daylight, but a sort of greenish light, of great brilliancy, and seemed some distance away.

At the point where Mose first discovered this, the passage began to ascend quite steeply.

"Well, this begins to look interesting, but I've got to go careful. There's no telling what is beyond that green light. The green-eyed monster may be there, for all I know!"

The light did not seem to grow any larger, as the detective advanced; and then there was a fluttering sound and what should alight on Mose's shoulder but Polly!

"Poor Poll!" she said. "Polly want cake. Pete gone!"

"Well, Poll shall have cake and whisk. Go for Pete!" and placing the bird on the ground he pushed her along before him.

"Go to Pete!" he said.

Obeying orders the queer guide strutted on.

"Deliverance is at hand!" thought Mose.

A walk of two minutes, brought them to the spot where the green light was.

It proved to be a tiny lantern, hung to a nail that was fastened into the rock.

Near it was another shaft, similar to the one that Mose had come down.

There were also jagged steps, leading up to some chamber or drift.

Mose took the lantern.

"This will give some light on the subject, I reckon. Now, Poll, which way?"

Poll made no reply, but proceeded to hop up these steps.

The steps were hard to climb, but at last Mose and Poll reached the top, where a halt was made.

They were now evidently in a cellar, for overhead was a real flooring, and in the excavation were barrels, bottles, and a general stock of household supplies, such as flour, sugar, hams, and so forth.

A wooden stairway also led upward.

"Well, this looks as if we were in the cellar of somebody's shebang," said Mose.

He then set about further investigations.

Whose house was it?

Perhaps Sage's!

Considering the distance he had traveled since coming down the shaft, he could hardly make it seem possible that he was in under-

Sage's house, yet such was probably the case, for who in Devil's Gulch could afford such a well stocked cellar?

"Well, I can't do more than take my chances," concluded Mose. "If I get left, I shall have to fight my way out."

So placing the bird in his coat pocket, as Pete was wont to do with the bird when on the tramp, Mose proceeded to mount the stairs. On reaching the landing above, he found a heavy door confronting him.

Trying it, he found that it was not locked, as he feared it would be.

Now came the risky part of the job.

If he ventured out, might he not get a bullet through his brain?

His revolvers being empty, and water-soaked as well, his only available weapon was his bowie-knife.

He must act, however, so he cautiously pushed open the door.

It opened into a long hall, which was richly carpeted.

This hall apparently ran to the front of the house.

On either side of it were rooms, and the doors of all of them appeared to be wide open.

To reach the front of the house, Mose would have to pass all these open doors, and so run the risk of discovery.

Then, too, there was no telling when Poll would begin to squawk.

There was, apparently, no rear exit to the hall, not even a window.

There were voices heard in one of the front rooms, but Mose could not make out what was said.

The speakers, however, were feminine.

Mose stood for several minutes meditating over what to do.

If he escaped from the house his mission of finding both Harry Harris and Pete Parrot would remain unfulfilled, but where was he to look for them now?

A horrifying thought now struck him.

Perhaps they had been drowned in the underground sea into which he himself had dropped?

"But, that seems hardly probable," he decided. "If this is Sage's house, and I've no longer a doubt but it is, those two men are here, somewhere, and Magic Mose don't leave the place until he finds 'em, if he loses his scalp by remaining. If this parrot will only keep his mouth shut, I may be able to make a canvass of the premises."

But, Polly was not destined to keep still, for she immediately squawked.

"Poor Polly! Pete gone! Polly want a cracker!"

"Well, Poll won't get one," muttered Mose. "Confound you, if you open that mouth of yours again, I'll wring your neck!"

Poll evidently knew what this meant for she remained silent.

Mose then stole along the hall, peering into each room as he went.

All were elegantly furnished, far more so than one would have expected to find, in a place like Devil's Gulch.

None of them were occupied, however, except the front parlor, wherein the voices were heard.

Mose stole forward, took a swift glance in at the door, and then dodged back, to avoid discovery.

There were three occupants to the parlor, instead of two.

One was Samuel Sage, the other was his daughter, and the third his wife, a languid, but hard-faced looking woman, on the shady side of forty.

Sage was speaking:

"If that detective had not come here, Ben would not have backed out. But, now, I reckon it's all up. He said this morning that it was his opinion that the wedding had better be postponed for awhile."

At this, Nora burst into tears.

"No! no!" she cried, "Burt will never be untrue to me I am sure."

"Oh, dry up!" snarled Sage. "When you have lived as long as I have, and passed through as much, you won't give way to little troubles. Bradford is already discharged from my employ, and has been notified that if he don't leave camp in forty-eight hours, he will be lynched!"

"Oh! papa, what has brought about this bad feeling toward Burton?"

"That is my business. He had in some way—probably through that cussed detective or my beloved friend Pete Parrot, learned what was known to no one except myself."

"And it concerns me?"

"It don't matter whom it concerns! If I get hold of that detective, his life will come to a sudden close, be sure of that!"

"Oh! will it, though?" thought Mose. "Perhaps you're making a slight mistake. In fact I am sure you are. If any one's life comes to a close, it strikes me quite forcibly that it will be yours, you old scoundrel!"

The climax was at hand.

Poll Parrot poked her head out of the pocket of Magic Mose, and yelled at the top of her shrill voice:

"Polly want cake!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN GREAT LUCK.

A SAVAGE oath came from the parlor.

"That accursed parrot again!" cried the voice of Samuel Sage. "How in Satan's name could she have got back into the house again?"

This told Mose that Poll had previously been fired out.

One of the doors near which Mose was standing, being open, the detective dashed in with stealthy quickness, and closed it.

He heard Sage come rushing out of the parlor, into the hall, and to prevent further suspicion of his presence, Mose reached his hand into his coat pocket, and shut off Poll's wind, for a few seconds, so that she could not squawk.

The room into which he had bolted was a bedroom, and out of it rose a staircase, leading to the upper floor.

It was carpeted, and Mose lost no time in mounting the steps.

When he reached the upper landing he found a duplicate of the lower hall, with rooms on each side.

But in this instance all the doors were locked.

Down-stairs Sage was thundering about in great shape.

"Well, I reckon there is no hope here," decided Mose after he had tried all of the doors, and listened at them. "It don't appear that either Pete or Harry are confined here."

He paced along the hall, wondering how he was going to get out of the house without detection, when, suddenly, he missed something.

Poll was gone!

The bird had managed to get out of his pocket, without attracting his attention.

She was now nowhere to be seen, or heard.

"Worse and worse!" he muttered. "The bird has gone down-stairs to still further give me away."

It seemed so, for Mose now heard Sam Sage come lumbering up the stairway, swearing at every step.

What was he to do?

It is not a pleasant thing to be caught prowling around another man's house.

There was no apparent way of avoiding a collision, until Mose spied a skylight in the roof.

There was a step-ladder beneath this, and to mount it was but the matter of a few

seconds; then to uplift the window sash was but the matter of a few more seconds; so that when the master of the mansion reached the upper hall, he arrived there just in time to see the intruder's heels disappearing through the skylight.

With an execration he clambered up the ladder, but before he reached the top the ladder fell backward, and went to the floor with a crash.

This made Sage madder than ever, of course, but righting the ladder, he ascended once more.

When he reached the top of the ladder, and poked his head up through the opening, he found his nose conspicuously close to the muzzles of a pair of revolvers, held in the grasp of Detective Magic Mose!

Of course, as the reader has already been told, the guns were unloaded, but Sam Sage, the magnate of Devil's Gulch, was not aware of the fact, and being a coward at heart, he most naturally hesitated.

Magic Mose seeing this cowardice proceeded to take advantage of the situation.

"Why, hello! Is that you, Sage? Are you coming up to see Saint Peter? If so you will have to go back. Peter is off on a vacation and you can't get in!"

"Put up them revolvers and I will mighty quick show you whether I can't come in, or not!" replied Sage. "What were you doing in my house?"

"Prospecting!"

"Prospecting for what?"

"For rats, and one thing or another like that. Any objections?"

"Yes, I have objections! I want you to come down off that roof."

"Pshaw! the roof ain't doing me any hurt, and I rather like it up here. The air is more pure, and it is more healthy for me, in every respect, than it would be down below. No, thank you, friend Sage, I am quite comfortable where I am. If you don't mind, however, you can go down and fetch me up something to eat, and if you have got any cold chicken, or quail on toast, why just trot that along."

"If you don't come down off my roof, I will kill you!" cried Sage, fiercely.

"I can't see how you are going to do it, when I have the drop."

"But, I will, though! I'll go and hire every man in the town if I can't get at you in any other way!"

"All right! Trot 'em along. But, first, bring me up the quail, for I am as hungry as a famished goat. And, for the love of heaven, friend Grant, don't forget to bring along a napkin. If anything in the world spoils my appetite it is to be without a napkin, when I dine!"

The cool audacity of this young detective fairly took Sage's breath away.

"What do you mean by calling me Grant?" he demanded.

"I call you Grant, because that is your name. Years ago you won a child away from a gambler, on the Mississippi river steamboat. I am after that girl to restore her to those who will care for her."

"I know nothing about the affair, you impostor."

"But you do, though. The girl whom you claim to be your daughter is Hazel Hood, daughter of Hood, the Mississippi river gambler, who, after you had won all his money, and the child in the bargain, blew his brains out!"

"It is false, ridiculous, you miserable liar!"

"It is true, and you know it, you old reprobate!"

"I say it is false. Nora is my own child, by my first wife."

"You never had a wife until you got the one you now possess."

"You lie! What the deuce do you know about it? I may have had a dozen."

"But, you haven't, though."

"How do you know?"

"Because Pete Parrot has told me all, and he ought to know, being your own brother."

"Young man," retorted Sage, "I cannot help but admire your extraordinary gall. It surpasses anything I ever ran across, and although you are a detective, and gunning after the wrong game, if you will believe me, you deserve recognition for your unlimited amount of cheek! So if you will come down, we will touch glasses together, and have an understanding!"

This was a proposition that Mose had reason to be suspicious of.

"Well, I don't know about that," he said. "I reckon you are trying to spring a trap on me!"

"No, I am not, I am a man of my word as any one in the camp will tell you. I will refer you to my worst enemy, though I don't know that I have one, unless it is Pete Parrot, but as he is dead now, he can do me no more harm."

"Pete Parrot dead?"

"Yes. He had been hounding me for years, but, he will never do it any more."

"Where is his body?"

"That is my business! He is dead, and that settles it."

"Ha-ha-ha! Pete's all right!"

And who should alight on Mose's shoulder, but the parrot.

"Poor Polly! Polly wants a cracker!"

"Curse that parrot," cried Sage. "If I ever get my clutches on it, I will wring its infernal neck!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" said Poll. "Polly want cake. Pete's Polly. Oohoo!"

The talk of this wonderful bird, created a better impression in Mose's mind toward Samuel Sage, because that gentleman burst into a roar of laughter.

"Well!" he said, "were I the worst creature on the face of this broad earth, and had a rope around my neck, I could not help laughing at that bird. Come down with it and both it and you shall have the best I have in the house!"

"Well, I will go on one condition," replied Mose.

"What is that?"

"That you release Pete Parrot, at once."

"I have no power to release him. Did not Poll tell you that he was all right?"

"Pete all right," repeated the bird. "Pete all all hunkey! Oohoo!"

"Well, steer ahead, brother Sage, but bear in mind that I shall shoot on the first sign of treachery. I am a dead shot, and, if you have done any injury to your brother I'll bore a Hoosac Tunnel through you just as soon as I would kill a rattler."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLE.

So Polly, Mose, and Sage went below, Polly squawking, and Mose keeping his revolvers in seeming readiness.

The room to which Sage conducted them was one that Mose had not yet discovered. It turned off the lower hall into a little alcove; thence into still another hall.

This one, however, was short. It opened into a room that was evidently Sage's private office, as there were two desks.

"Sit down," requested Sage, "and I will ring for the servant," which he at once did.

The bell was quickly answered, when Sage ordered the servant to bring in ample refreshments.

"Now, then," said Sage, to Mose, "let us understand each other. What do you propose to do?"

"I propose to take Hazel Hood," replied Mose.

"Oh! you will have to find her, first! There is no such a person in this camp."

"There is; the girl you call your daughter is Hazel Hood!"

"She is not."

"She is. I can prove it."

"How?"

"By a birthmark—a stain upon her arm."

"My Nora has no such a birthmark on her person."

"Prove it. Bring her here and let me examine her arm and satisfy myself!"

"I will do nothing of the sort."

"Then that proves that she has such a birthmark."

"If you think you can take Nora away from me you are greatly mistaken," declared Samuel Sage. "I've got money, and money will command backing. To-morrow I will be elected to the position of sheriff."

"What of that?"

"A good deal."

"I fail to see it!"

"Well, you will see it, with a vengeance."

"How so?"

"If you don't leave town before I get into office, I'll have you arrested."

"I'll bet you won't!"

"I'll bet I will; and, what is more, I'll have you hung in short order."

"What will I be doing all this time? Bah! The rope is not made that will ever hang me. Now, Sage, allow me to remark that I shall remain in Devil's Gulch until I get good and ready to leave it, and don't you forget it!"

"It will be as a corpse when you do leave."

"It will be as a mighty lively corpse. I mean to have possession of Hazel Hood, and when I rescue Pete Parrot and Happy Harry my mission in Devil's Gulch is fulfilled, and not until then."

"Ha! ha! I will be delighted to see you when you do it!"

Seeing that nothing was to be gained by further investigation Mose now arose and took his departure, being conducted to the door by Sage, himself.

"Remember what the consequences will be if you are found in this camp to-morrow," the later warned at the door.

"I shall stay in town at my pleasure, and leave at my leisure," returned Mose as he left the magnate's presence.

He was not quite sure what reception he would receive, when he debouched on the main street of the camp, but he must take his chances.

Perhaps by this time the excitement had partly abated.

He found it so, for though he was the recipient of many ugly glances, no attempt was made to molest him.

CHAPTER X.

HOOD THE GAMBLER.

THE balance of that night until the next one, Magic Mose rambled around from one place to another.

In every place he visited, the patrons of that place gave him a wide berth.

Even Pat McKenna, whom every one knew to be the worst desperado next to Black Ben, in Devil's Gulch, fought shy of Magic Mose.

In the mean time, Mose mystified the people of the camp by his wonderful feats of magic.

Mostly untutored, these men of Devil's Gulch made bold to assert that it was their impression that Mose was Satan's ally and envoy.

It did look so. He could perform most wonderful feats of legerdemain, without any apparent mechanical devices or apparatus. He could take a dozen and one things from a person's hat, apparently—things of numerous kinds, and of astonishing variety. Where they came from, no one

could guess, as he always kept his sleeves rolled up.

Miners are naturally superstitious, and they began to look upon Mose as an unnatural phenomenon—an evil spirit, sent to worry them out of their lives or good luck.

The "White House," run by a "coon" named Black, and nicknamed Nigger Jim, was one of the principal gaming institutions of Devil's Gulch.

During his perambulations, the parrot perched on his shoulder, Magic Mose dropped into Nigger Jim's place.

It was a dingy little den, with scarcely any window light; so lamps were kept burning night and day, as the place was never closed.

Jim was the biggest man in the camp, weighing close onto three hundred pounds, and standing six-feet-six in his stocking feet.

The patrons of his place consisted of the roughest element in the camp—which was saying a good deal, for Devil's Gulch was known far and wide as one of the toughest places in Arizona.

A faro game was in full blast, and so Mose bought a stack of chips, and sat down, to try his luck.

He fully expected to lose, but such was not destined to be his fortune, for he won steadily.

Next to him sat a man of peculiar appearance. He was tall and compactly built, dark of complexion, with pink eyes.

His hair was silvery white although he was evidently less than fifty, but beard he wore none.

He was well-dressed, and had the bearing of a gentleman.

Every card that Magic Mose placed money on, the stranger did likewise, and when Mose arose from the table, about five hundred dollars the winner, the stranger arose, also, nearly as well fixed. Mose then went to the bar, to get a cigar, the pink-eyed gentleman following him.

"Beg pardon, sir!" he said, tapping Mose on the shoulder; "but, might I make bold to ask you what your name is?"

"Certainly. It is Moses Mantell. But, why do you ask?"

"Because you must take a drink with me."

"Very well, I don't often drink but I will accommodate."

"Give us a bottle of your best wine," the stranger ordered of Nigger Jim.

The mention of liquid refreshments caused Polly, who had been asleep on the shoulder of Magic Mose, to open her eyes.

"Polly want a drink!" she squawked.

"Polly want cake!"

This set the pink-eyed gentleman off in a fit of laughter.

"Great Jupiter!" he ejaculated, "you don't mean to tell me that bird can talk thus?"

"You bet!" said Poll, flapping her wings.

"Well, upon my word, this is the most wonderful bird I ever heard tell of!" asserted the stranger. "I'll give you fifty dollars for her!"

"She's not mine to sell."

"Whose is she, then? I want to buy her."

"She belongs to a friend of mine, named, or at least called, Pete Parrot. There is not money enough in Devil's Gulch to buy that bird. I parded with Pete, for a long time, but he never accepted any of the offers he had received for the bird."

"Pete Parrot, eh? Why I happen to know the man!"

"You don't say so?"

"Yes; I knew him when he was pilot on the Mississippi. He came into a fortune, and then I heard nothing of him for a couple of years, when news reached me that he had been lynched through the instrumentality of his brother, in order that the brother could get possession of his fortune."

"What was this brother's name?"

"Sam. He went under a good many assumed names, however, among others that of Grant. He was a gambler, by profession, and used to travel up and down the river, on a rival boat to mine."

Here was information—information, that might be of decisive value to Mose, in pursuing his case.

"By the way," said Mose, "if you have traveled up and down the Mississippi, you may have heard of a gambler, some years back, by the name of Hood?"

"Yes."

"He committed suicide, I believe?"

"That was the report, at the time, but it was incorrect. After gambling away his child, he attempted suicide, but, the attempt was not a success."

"Then, is he still living?"

"He is."

"Where?"

"Here in Devil's Gulch, at present. After the attempted suicide, he was judged to be crazy and was sent to an asylum, where, through the connivance of this man Grant, otherwise Parrot, who won his child, I was held until last year, when the board of examiners released me."

"Released *you*?" ejaculated Mose. "What do you mean?"

"Yes, me; for I am Hood, the gambler."

"In search of your child?"

"Yes. I have been ransacking the country in search of her, ever since I escaped from the asylum."

"Would you know Grant, after all these years if you were to meet him?"

"I think not. He has probably greatly changed, you see, in all these years."

"Have you been here in Devil's Gulch, long?"

"No, but I've been here long enough to kill one man!"

And the gambler shut his teeth hard together.

"And who was that man?" asked Mose.

"The accursed wretch who attempted to perform the wedding ceremony for Sage's daughter. He was formerly a partner of Grant's, or side-partner, in gambling, and it was through him that I lost my child, as I know now that he stocked the cards and so made me lose."

"That accounts for one mystery. Do you recognize in Nora Sage any resemblance to what your daughter might have been?"

"Yes. But, why do you ask?"

"Because, I have pretty strong faith that she is your daughter."

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, I'll tell you. Do you know your wife is dead?"

"No; I was not aware of it."

"Well, she is, and left behind her a fortune. Before her demise she sent for me, told me of your tragic death, and employed me to go in search of her daughter, to whom the fortune was left. That is what brings me to Devil's Gulch."

"Did you expect to find her here?"

"Yes, and I still expect to."

"Why so?"

"A dream. I dreamed she was here, and that she was like what Nora Sage now is; and now the further fact that Pete Parrot has recognized Sage to be his own brother, on the lawn, confirms my assumption."

"Did Pete Parrot recognize Sage as his brother Sam?"

"Yes, and made Sage acknowledge the identity."

"Where is Pete Parrot now?"

"Don't know. He went to Sage's house, and did not return. Happy Harris went in search of him, but he did not return. Then I went in search of both of them."

"Well?"

"I found no trace of either. There can be no doubt, however, but that both are held prisoners by Sage."

"Very likely. In his house, do you think?"

"I think not. I gained entrance to Sage's house, but was discovered and my search frustrated. I had a talk with Sage, however."

"What did he have to say?"

"He denied all knowledge of Pete and Harry, and stoutly asserted that Nora was his own child."

"Did you see her?"

"Yes, but not to speak to her."

"Have you ever spoken to her?"

"No."

"Well, we must devise some plan to see her," decided Hood.

"You're right, and that, too, as soon as possible, for Sage may have her spirited away, now that he knows I am on a hot scent."

The question how to set to work to secure an interview with Nora, was now debated.

It was natural to suppose that after this, Sage, as we shall still continue to call him, would keep his doors closed to everybody.

The only way to reach the interior would be to use the route of the underground passage, of which he told Hood.

Even this was liable to prove a failure, as it was more than likely Sage would closely guard this approach.

"I have an idea," said Hood. "Do you know if Nora had a suitor?"

"She did, in the person of Burton Bradford, who was Sage's mine-boss. But, for some reason I don't quite understand, the match has been broken off, and Bradford has been discharged."

"I can tell you the reason!" spoke up a miner, who was standing near, and had overheard the last of this conversation. "We're goin' to elect a mayor, to-morrow, over Sage's head, and our man will be Burt Bradford. Ye see et galls Sage to occupy a less honorable position than one of his former employees!"

"I see. Where would we be apt to find this man Bradford?" asked Hood of the miner.

"He is liable to drop in here at any time. He lives a mile out of camp, in as neat a little cottage as you would want for yourself—lives there all alone."

"Could we get you to guide us to the place, my good man?"

"Yes, I kin show ye the way."

So they set forth, the miner, who gave his name as Hill, striding a few yards in advance.

En route, Hood said:

"Do you think that Sage has any knowledge of the fortune that has been left my daughter?"

"It is possible. I have been thinking of it, and the more I consider it, the more inclined I am to suspect that he does. He is a deep rascal and can be reasonably suspected of any crooked thing."

"You are right, I believe."

"But what good could he get out of the property and money? It is left unreservedly to Hazel Hood! She is of age isn't she?"

Hood scratched his head, and reflected.

"No, not yet of legal age," he said. "She is not yet twenty-one."

"Ah! then I fancy I begin to see the outline of the plot!" Magic Mose said.

"In what way?"

"Why, if Sage has always kept the girl in ignorance of who she is, he could manage to acquire all her inheritance."

"In what way?"

"By fraud."

"Explain yourself."

"Well, Hazel being ignorant of her birth, he could represent himself to the executors, as her guardian, and, by producing bogus papers to prove this,—an easy thing to do from the shyster lawyers of to-day,—and by giving bogus bonds, he could lay claim to the fortune, to hold for Hazel, until she was

of legal age. All of this could be accomplished by giving the executors a good round fee, for who ever saw an executor who wouldn't fish for the biggest fee?"

Hood gazed at the young detective, with curious interest.

"Well, young man!" he ejaculated, "it rather hits me that you are better fitted for the legal profession than any other. I believe your theory to be reasonable."

"These executors—who are they?"

"Two lawyers, whom I wouldn't trust half so far as I could see them."

"This matter must be thoroughly investigated; and, by heavens, I'll make Sam Parrot pay the full price for his villainy!"

"Have you a grudge against Pete, too?"

"No; we were always on the best of terms."

By this time they had reached Bradford's cottage.

CHAPTER XI.

PETE PARROT ON A STRING.

HILL, the miner, had made no mistake, when he said Burt Bradford had a neat little cottage.

Although it was only one story high, and contained but four rooms, it was so nicely furnished that it was an ideal house.

There was a piazza, in front, while a neat picket fence, painted white, inclosed a small yard. The house was painted white, and everywhere the deft hand of Burt Bradford could be seen, for he was a fastidious person, in his tastes.

No man in Devil's Gulch could vie with him in neatness of appearance, and few if any men in the camp were as handsome of face or of figure.

The night was warm, and although the hour was late, Bradford still lounged upon the piazza, in an easy-chair.

"Mr. Bradford, I believe?" Mose said, as he and Hood advanced up the path to the house.

"The same, sir. You, I believe, are the man they call Magic Mose?"

"I am. This gentleman is a friend of mine—a Mr. Hood."

"Glad to see you both, for I have no neighbors, and as I don't run around much, the everlasting silence of these parts becomes monotonous. What can I do for you? What will you have to drink?"

Without awaiting a reply Bradford entered the house.

He soon came back: bearing a tray, containing glasses and bottles.

"There, gentlemen," he said, setting the tray on a small table. "Help yourselves, and then I should be pleased to know to what I am indebted for this visit."

"We came to speak to you concerning the lady who is now known as Nora Sage."

The moonlight streamed in on Bradford's handsome face, and Mose noticed an expression of sadness pass over it.

"I regret to have her name made the subject of gossip, sir!" he said.

"There is no gossip about it, sir—simply a friendly interchange of confidences. We are not friends of Samuel Sage, whose name is not Sage at all."

"Well, go ahead," said Bradford. "What is it you want to know?"

"We want to know if you are aware of the fact that Nora is not old Sage's daughter," replied Mose; "that she not only is not his daughter, but is no relation to him?"

"I cannot say that I positively know it, but we have suspected such to be the case."

"You and Nora?"

"Yes."

"I understand the interruption to your wedding ceremony has caused the match to be broken off, for good?"

"Yes, it seems so. I have not seen or heard from Nora since we were on the eve of being married."

"You have been discharged from Sage's employ, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"For what?"

"No reason was given. I always attended to my duties, and made lots of money for Sage. It will be some time before he will find a manager to do as well for him as I have done."

"I presume so. How long have you and Nora been intimate acquaintances?"

"About a year."

"Did she ever mention to you that she had a star-shaped birthmark on her arm?"

"Yes. It is a perfect-shaped star, about the size of half a dollar."

"You have seen it, then," asked Hood excitedly, "on my daughter's arm?"

"Your daughter?" ejaculated Bradford. "You don't mean to tell me Nora really is your daughter? It cannot be possible!"

"There can no longer be any doubt of it," replied Hood. "At first, when I met Magic Mose, and received assurance that he had, through no agency of mine but of my deceased wife, found my long-lost child,—my darling Hazel, whom, like the accursed wretch I was, I gambled away, I was incredulous to the last degree, and almost tempted to denounce him as an impostor. But, now, after what he has revealed to me, and convinced me is true, I know that Hazel Hood is the one you have known as Nora Sage!"

"I hope so," said Bradford, "for she is lost to me, while she remains where she is."

"Don't fret, young man. She won't be there long. But let me say, I'm getting along in years, yet when I meet Sam Parrot there's going to be a terrible reckoning; one of us is going to drop. But, good-night, boys. See you later. I'm going to see my child."

And almost before they were aware the giant gambler was off.

It was not until he was out of sight that Mose made a discovery!

Polly had forsaken the perch on his shoulder, and was nowhere to be seen.

She had gone so quietly that Mose had not noticed her departure.

"Poll has skipped again!" he said.

"I wonder where could she have gone?"

"With Hood, I reckon!"

"Don't think so. She never goes with strangers—only with me and Pete. Something has called her away. But, I say, Bradford, as Hood is likely to have trouble I desire to be in at the death. Are you with me?"

"Well, yes, I reckon so. Anything that imperils Nora will draw me to her side."

"Then come! We will strike together if strike we must."

So they hastened to close the cottage and then hurried toward the camp.

Midway another surprise awaited them.

Poll alighted on Mose's shoulder.

"Pete!" she screeched, and then flew away.

"What does that mean?" asked Bradford, his curiosity greatly excited.

"It means trouble," replied Mose. "It would not surprise me if Pete was being lynched."

"You don't mean it?"

"I do; so come, let us hurry," and the two men started on a run.

When they reached the main street of the camp, they beheld a sight that many would not care to see.

Opposite Nigger Jim's place was a big oak tree with long, outspreading branches.

By the neck, and to these branches, hung two swaying bodies.

One was Pete Parrot's and the other was that of Happy Harry Harris.

On the top of Pete's head was perched Polly!

"Poor Polly!" she screamed. "Poor Pete! Pete gone debbil!"

An angry crowd surrounded the tree, hooting and yelling like a pack of maniacs.

Evidently they had just been strung up.

"It's a lynch picnic, sure as you live!" cried Mose. "Give me your revolver."

Bradford complied, and taking careful aim, Mose fired.

The strands of the rope that held Pete Parrot by his neck were cut and the body dropped to the ground.

Another shot and the marvelous aim of Mose did as much for Happy Harry.

"Now, charge!" cried Mose. "We must save them!"

Burt Bradford, although a plucky man, hesitated.

"I reckon it won't pay us to be rash!" he observed.

"How do you mean?" demanded Mose. "I am sure you are not a coward!"

Neither I am, but I don't believe we can fight that gang. Two against fifty is too much!"

"Yet, the Burton Bradford faction are going to elect you for mayor, I hear. You can go forward and stop this business. We cannot see them hung."

"No, I wouldn't like to; yet I am afraid my influence wouldn't go far enough to do them any good."

"I think it would," insisted Mose.

"So do I," added Hill, who hitherto had remained silent. "I'm with you, Mose!"

So they rushed forward, firing as they advanced.

The crowd that had lynched Harris and Pete scattered but returned no fire.

Mose was first to reach the bodies, but Burt and Hill were close behind him.

Happy Harry was dead; he had evidently been strangled, as soon as pulled up.

Pete was not dead, for his heart still beat.

"Quick! get some brandy, or whisky!" cried Mose, to Burt. "He can be saved yet I think!"

Burt ran into Nigger Jim's and quickly returned with a goblet full of Jim's best liquor.

This was fed through Pete's lips by degrees, and by degrees consciousness began to return.

Soon the sufferer opened his eyes and looked around him.

He glanced at the fragments of rope overhead, and then quietly removed the noose from about his neck, and during all this procedure, had said not a word.

But, when he had removed the rope, he looked up, and remarked:

"It won't work! They can't palm off any collars like that on me, not if I am acquainted with myself. Hello, Mose! What aire ye doin' heer?"

"I rather opine we've been fetching you back to life!" replied his pard.

"Well, darn my socks ef that ain't kind of you. Do as much for you, next time they string you up! Where is Poll?"

"Here she is, and she was the means of our coming to your rescue," replied Mose.

"Bully for Poll! I allus knew she'd go to Congress. Hey, Poll?"

"You bet!" said Poll. "Polly want cake."

"Well, be gosh, she shall have all she can swaller!"

When he arose and found Happy Harry silent in death, Pete Parrot, for the first time in many years, probably, burst into tears.

"Poor Harry! He came to my rescue, and this is the result. Darn me if I would not have had it different, for Harry was a noble fellow. I knew him before I ever knew you, Mose, and under circumstances that give me occasion to mourn his death."

"By the way, boys, what's to be done with poor Harry? We can't leave him lying here. Shall we take him home to his wife, if he has one?"

"Surely. I know where his house is," said Burt Bradford. "Poor woman! she will now be left upon her own resources, which are mighty slim, I reckon."

"Well, I'll give you a tip on one thing!" suggested Pete Parrot. "My brother Sam has signed his own death-warrant. He's hung me twice, and, now, it's his turn to swing. We will carry the corpse home; then I allow we will make a descent on Sage's house, eh?"

"Just what we will do," replied Magic Mose, with decision.

So they carried Harry's body home to his wife.

Then the poor woman was nearly frantic, when she saw the dead brought in.

Gambler though he had been, Happy Harry Harris had always been a good and a devoted husband.

Fortunately, they had no children, to now be a burden on the widow.

Expressing their deepest sympathy for widow, the party took their leave.

The night was now well advanced toward morning; the moon had gone down.

"I wonder if Sam is still up?" queried Pete, as the party moved toward the Sage residence.

"He will not be likely to be in bed, after stringing up two men, or causing them to be strung up—at least I shouldn't think so," remarked Bradford.

"It wouldn't surprise me a bit," said Magic Mose, "if the bird has flown."

"Nor me, either," said Hill. "There's so many fires against him that I don't fancy he will find it healthy to remain here, for awhile. He's no fool."

"Moreover he is a coward!" asserted Burt Bradford.

"The question is, how are we going to get into the house?" said Pete.

Hill spoke up: "You'd better find out, first, if Sam's in the house. If we were to force an entrance, we might run into an ambush."

"That's so," agreed Bradford, for I saw some of Sage's heelers coming this way."

"How are you to tell whether he's in the house, or not?"

"I can tell," said Hill. "He has a stable, a little distance, where he keeps three fine saddle-horses, it being customary for him, his wife and Nora to take a morning gallop. If the horses are still there, the chances are that the old man is at home. If they are not he's vamosed. You all wait here, and I will go and see."

"Do so, and be lively about it, for, if they have gone, we must follow them," decided Mose.

"You bet we will!" averred Pete Parrot.

"You bet!" echoed Poll.

Hill hurried away, while Mose and his companions sat down on the grass to await his return.

"In case they have gone, where would they be most likely to go?" Mose asked of Burt Bradford.

"I think to Virginia City," replied Burt, "as that is the nearest railroad point; and besides, the old man has money in the bank, there."

"I see. Then, if they have gone at all, it is more than probable they are there, if not here. How far is it to Virginia City from here?"

"About ten miles, I reckon."

"Then it would not take them long to get there, even though they have not got much a start."

"No; we'd have to hurry."

Magic Mose turned to Pete.

"Was Samuel Sage, or whatever his name is, present at your lynching?" he asked.

"Yes."

In about ten minutes Hill returned.

"I reckon they're gone," he announced, "for the horses are gone."

"That settles it," said Burt Bradford.

"They've taken the alarm, and fled to Virginia City."

"Then, we must foller 'em, at once—foller 'em 'ef it's to the end of the earth!" cried Pete Parrot.

"I reckon you wont find 'em in Virginia City," Hill opined.

"Why not?"

"Because Sam is cute enough to know that there would be the first place you would look for him, and don't you forget it."

"Where do you think he went?" asked Magic Mose.

"The old man has another mine, about twelve miles beyond Virginia City, and I reckon they're gone there."

"Do you know the way there?"

"Of course I do."

"Will you guide us?"

"Yes; in course I will!"

"Now, the next thing is horses."

"I can get them!" said Bradford.

"All right! You get them, and we will remain here."

So Burt hurried away.

"While he is gone, I propose the advisability of breaking into the house, and have a look about," Pete suggested.

"I am not quite sure about the propriety of such a move," said Mose.

"Why?"

"Because, if we were caught in the act, we could be held for burglary."

"But, who is going to catch us?"

"We can't tell about that. Sage may not be away, at all."

"Even ef he ain't, we're enough for him every day in the week, and twice on Sunday."

"But, there may be an ambush, as Hill suggested."

"Get out! Ef you're afraid, why stay away. Hill, you hunt up a crowbar, and I will pry open the door myself."

Hill vanished, and was gone several minutes. When he returned, he brought with him two sharp-pointed crowbars.

"These will do the business," he said. "Come ahead, and we will soon make an opening!"

So they attacked the door.

It was not an easy job to pry open the door—not half as easy as they had anticipated. It was evidently both barred and bolted on the inside.

But, after several minutes' work they succeeded in prying it off its hinges.

Before them lay a hallway as dark as pitch.

"Come on, boys! We will explore the shebang or bu'st a suspender. I allow that as my beloved brother Samuel lives here, I've a right to make myself at home, being as he has on several occasions found amusement at seeing my shapely legs kicking air."

And Pete and Poll entered the hall, followed by Hill and Magic Mose.

They advanced along the hall in the dense darkness a few steps; then Pete paused, and uttered an exclamation.

"What is the matter?" demanded Magic Mose.

"Cuss the luck, where's my parrot gone? He's flown away. Where's he gone?"

"Who's got a match? It's darker than black paint here, and I don't want to break this *ne plus ultra* neck of mine."

Mose struck a light, and then led the way into the parlor, the door of which was open.

Here another door opened into a communicating room.

A lamp was found, and lit. By its light the three men began their explorations.

Everything in the parlor, and what proved to be a parlor bedroom, was in a state of confusion. Clothes were scattered around, furniture displaced, and everything in a state of disorder.

"This proves conclusively that they have gone," Mose decided.

"Wal, yes, et do," replied Pete. "We'll go through the shebang, however."

And they did, to find the same state of disorder all over the house.

"Looks like as how there'd been a reg'lar rip-snortin' jamboree here, before they sloped," said Pete. "The old man must have been dancing a high-kickin' mazourka. But say! we must find my bird. We can't leave Poll here, nohow."

"We'll find her down cellar, and I'll bet money on it!" said Mose, "where the eatables and drinkables are."

So they descended to the kitchen, and thence to the cellar, the door of which was open.

Sure enough, here was Poll, perched upon a cracker barrel, and having a good time.

There being plenty of bottles in the cellar, each man appropriated one, and all were about to go up-stairs, when Mose paused and shook his finger at his companions for silence.

"Hist!" he said, in an undertone. "We are not alone here."

He had detected a peculiar sound.

He had also detected the movement of an overturned dry-goods box.

"Dry-goods boxes are not in the habit of moving!" thought Mose, "and I will take my oath I saw that one move."

And going to the box, he tipped it over.

And lo! and behold! the blackest little negro lad he had ever laid eyes upon—a boy of about twelve years of age.

The lad was terrified. His eyes fairly bulged out of their sockets, and he trembled in every joint.

"Ho! ho! look at the canary I've caught!" cried Mose, dragging the boy forth. "What do you think of him?"

"He's no canary!" said Pete. "He's what I should, metaphorically and scientifically speaking, call a blackbird. Who is he?"

"Sage's valet," said Hill. "They've left him behind, in charge."

"Which shows they mean to return, eh?"

"Oh! some time, undoubtedly. The old man ain't the kind to give up a gold mine, if he can help it."

"No, I presume not. The boy has got to tell us where the old man has gone, just the same."

And retaining a firm hold on the lad, Mose drew his bowie-knife, and whetted it on his bootleg, a very significant act.

"Now, Johnny," he said, "what's your name?"

"Gustus, sah!" replied the lad, shivering with fear.

"Well, 'Gustus, now listen to me. I don't want to hurt you, but I want you to tell me, truthfully, where your master has gone to. If you do, I'll let you go. If you don't I'm going to cut off that black scalp of yours. Now, then, where's he gone?"

"Ginny City," sniveled the boy.

"That settles it," declared Mose, turning to his companions. "We are on the right trail. Come, let's go!"

And they left the house.

CHAPTER XII.

HOLEING THE WOLF.

WHEN Magic Mose and his companions left the house, they found Burt Bradford awaiting with the horses.

"Well, what's the news?" asked Burt.

"None, except that they have gone to Virginia City," replied Mose. "They can't have gone long, I reckon, and if we ride like a whirlwind, we ought to overtake them."

"Fast riding is out of the question," explained Hill, "for the route is rough and rocky."

"Well, we will make the best time we can," Mose replied.

A quick mount was made, and the party set off at a gallop—Hill taking the lead.

The trail was indeed rough and rocky,

being through a boulderous gulch, up steep ascents, and down steep declines.

It was now broad daylight, which made the traveling easier.

"What do you propose to do," asked Burt, "when we find our man?"

"That depends. Pete, here, is his brother, and has a say in the matter," replied Magic Mose.

"I say hang him," said Pete, promptly.

"What! hang your own brother?"

"Yes."

"But, that is unnatural, isn't it?" questioned Bradford.

"Not much! He's hung me twice. It's my turn, now?"

The day was well advanced ere the party reached Virginia City.

This lively town was livelier than ever today, on account of elections.

"If Sage came here, where would he be most likely to put up?" Mose asked of Bradford.

"I am under the impression that he has a house, here. If so, he might go there. If not he would probably go to one of the best hotels."

"I reckon he didn't stop here, at all," put in Hill.

"You think he went on to his other mine?"

"I do, for a certainty."

"Well, then we'll go there."

"Oh! There won't be no harm to stop off here, and look around. I know a feller named Kelly, who does patrol duty about town, and he may be able to give us some information."

So, when they reached the American House, where all the stages stop that come in from the outlying districts, they drew rein, and dismounted.

The horses were given in charge of the hostler, and then the party entered the hotel.

Here Hill encountered Jim Kelly, the very man he wanted to see.

"Hello! Kelly."

"Hello! Hill. What fetched you here? Haven't seen you in a long time."

"I'm here on business, and maybe you will be able to help us out. Have a drink wi' us Jim."

"To be sure I will. No one ever knew Jim Kelly to refuse, and if I can do anything for ye, I'm ready and willin'!"

So the party indulged in a round of drinks, at the bar.

Then Hill said:

"Now, Kelly, have you seen old Sage lately?"

"Sure and I have."

"When?"

"Bright and early this mornin'."

"Where did you see him?"

"Passing the hotel."

"Were his wife and daughter with him?"

"Yes, both of them."

"Did they stop in town, d'ye know?"

"I reckon not, for they went up Tyler street, and I judge they took the deer trail goin' north. Anyhow, they acted like as if they were in considerable of a hurry, for they rode like thunder."

"They've gone to the mine," Hill said, turning to Magic Mose.

"Well, then we will go there," declared Mose, "and the sooner we start, the better."

"Aire ye after Sage fer any particular purpose?" asked Kelly.

"We are that."

"Then, you had better lay in a stock of weapons and ammunition, before you leave here, if you will listen to me."

"Why so?"

"Because you will have need for them. I'll take my oath that there ain't a tougher set of men in Nevada, than is employed at the Bonanza Mine, and as they all have to look to old Sage for their bread and butter, they won't be slow in backing him."

"They be blowed!" cried Pete Parrot. "We'll have him if we have to kill the hull lot of 'em."

"I guess we have got weapon's and ammunition enough!" said Magic Mose. "We shall use more strategy than force."

The party left the hotel, remounted their horses, and rode away, Hill in the lead.

The deer trail was not a roadway for vehicles, but simply a path that had been worn by the animals that gave it the name, some time in the past.

It was accessible on horseback however, and frequently used.

"I wonder if we will find them?" asked Bradford, as they rode along.

"It's hard to say," replied Mose. "They may not have gone to the mine, at all."

"I don't think so," said Hill. "Kelly he's got a keen eye, and knows about who comes in, and who leaves the town."

The location of this other mine of Sage's was in the midst of a dense forest; therefore it could be more readily approached than though it was in open land.

The forest surrounding it was pine and hemlock, and the foliage dense.

When this forest was at length reached, Hill drew rein.

"We'd better leave our horses here," he observed, "as we want to make the least show possible."

"Your head is level there," agreed Magic Mose. "I opine we have got a job ahead of us, that will require some tough work!"

"Don't be skeered," urged Pete Parrot. "We can do up the hull lot of 'em—can't we, Poll?"

"You bet!" and Poll gave a low chuckle.

A dismount was made, and the horses lariated out to graze; then, headed by Hill, the party plunged into the forest.

The journey was a tiresome one, but, fortunately, it was not long; in a little while the party reached a clearing.

Standing in the shadow of the trees, they took a survey.

The clearing comprised about twenty acres, and was rocky and full of stumps.

There were a dozen shanties and an ore mill, and one saloon and supply store.

The ore mill covered the mouth of the mine.

The camp appeared deserted. Not a soul was visible anywhere!

"This is the place," said Hill.

"Which house is Sage's?" asked Mose.

"All of 'em, but I don't know which one he puts up at."

"How will we find out?"

"Well, I reckon you better leave that to me. I know Burke, who runs the saloon, and I'll pay him a call, and find out all I can. You fellers stay here till I come back."

And with this Hill set off toward the ore mill, close to which was the saloon.

"Boys, you can remain here," said Magic Mose. "Two heads are better than one, if one is a sheep's head. I'm going to do a little skirmishing myself. So if Hill or I don't come back, you will know we're in trouble. I'm off, now, so take things easy."

"Polly go, too!" cried the parrot, hopping on to Mose's shoulder.

"Well, now, I reckon you won't!" replied Mose. "You stay with Pete!"

"No, no, no!" screamed Poll. "Pete hurt poor Poll!"

And Mose found it a hard matter to get the bird from his shoulder.

He finally succeeded, and after transferring Poll to her master, he set off on his tour of investigation. Careful to keep under the trees as much as possible, he made a circuit half way around the clearing, ere he emerged from their cover.

Then he stole toward the houses.

When he reached the first one, he rapped on the door.

A gigantic Irishwoman answered the summons.

"Ah! Good-morning!" saluted Mose. "Can you tell me where Mr. Sage lives, when he is in camp?"

"Sure, an' phat you want to know, for?"

"I want to see him on business," explained Mose. "I want to see if I can't strike a job."

"Oho! and that's phwat you be after is it? And maybe ye think ye'll be a-takin' my old man's job away from him, ye spaldeen!"

"I haven't the slightest idea of doing so," replied Mose.

"Well, yez will git no information here, so ye won't, so be off wid yez."

So Mose left.

The next house he tried, a big Dutchman came to the door.

"V'ot for you come knockin' mit my door on?" he demanded.

"I want to find out which house Mr. Sage occupies, when he is in camp!" Mose replied.

"I don'd vas know anyting about dot. You go ask some on'e else, and don'd you vas come poundin' on mine door some more times or I vill set dot bulldog of mine on you."

"Bah! you haven't got a bulldog, you old saurkraut barrel!" retorted Mose.

"Vel, you just go long avay off or you vil purty quick find."

And with this he slammed the door shut. Mose laughed, and turned away.

"Dutchy is off his base," he muttered. "It looks as if the denizens of these parts had been hired to keep still tongues in their heads, concerning Sage. I don't see as inquiry is going to do any good."

Nor did it look so; the case looked hopeless.

Coming to the conclusion that it was next to useless to try any more of the shanties, Magic Mose made up his mind to tackle the saloon.

"It is a venturesome thing to do," he said, "but I reckon I can pull through all right. I don't see anything of Hill around the camp and he may have got into trouble. The fellow has treated us white, and if any harm comes to him I'd be sorry. By the way, I wonder what could have become of that queer chap, Hood?"

The question was answered sooner than expected, for on his way toward the saloon, he ran plump up against Hood!

"Hello!" cried Hood. "What in wonder are you doing here?"

"On the same mission as you, I reckon," replied Mose.

"After that villain, Parrot?"

"Yes."

"You haven't found him?"

"No, but I allow he's here."

"So I thought, but I've not been able to find hide nor hair of him."

"Did you inquire at the saloon?"

"Yes."

"No news."

"None."

"Don't you think they have given us the slip and gone somewhere else?"

"No, I do not. I am satisfied they are in this camp, but in hiding. Just where they are hiding is an enigma to me, as I am sure they are in none of the shanties."

"Perhaps they are down in the mine!"

"That may possibly be. But, supposing they are, how are we going to get at them? They're in pretty safe quarters, if they're down in the mine, for they have got all the miners as a body-guard, and we'd have a mighty hard time capturing them."

"No doubt about that," assented Magic Mose, "but we must at least make an attempt to find out."

"Who accompanied you bere?" asked Hood.

"Pete Parrot, Burt Bradford, and a man named Hill."

"Where are they?"

"Two of them are on the opposite side of the clearing. Hill is somewhere about camp, looking for Sage, same as I have been doing. I've lost sight of him, and have misgivings that something has happened to him."

"Well, I don't see as anything can be done before night, do you?"

"Well, no."

"I presume the miners will leave the mine at dark?"

"Unless there are two gangs of them."

"There isn't, for I found that much out of the saloon-keeper."

"Then our best policy is to hang around until night. It's cloudy and will be dark tonight."

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

It was not long until night would set in, so Mose and Hood gave up the search for the present, and skirted the borders of the forest to where Bradford and Pete Parrot were squatted.

"Well, what luck?" demanded Pete.

"None. We shall have to wait until night," replied Mose. "Do you know this man, Pete?"

Pete surveyed the Mississippi River gambler for a moment, and then leaped to his feet.

"Why, bless my big toe, it's Hood!"

"It ain't any one else, Pete," assured Hood. "How's your heart, old boy?"

"Wal, it's a little shriveled up, but I allow there's enough of it left to be won by the first good-lookin' gal that comes along with a fat bank account. I thought you had turned your toes toward Venus."

"The same to you. But, we both still seem to be alive."

"You bet!" and the two men ther. shook hands.

It was a meeting such as does one good to witness, and both Hood and Parrot enjoyed it.

"Have you seen anything of Hill, since I went away?" Mose asked of Burt Bradford.

"No. The last I saw of him, he was about entering the saloon," said Burt.

Mimutes merged into hours, but still Hill did not return.

"Ye kin bet he's got into some consarned difficulty," declared Pete Parror, as night drew on apace, "and we'll clean out the hull camp, but we will rescue him,—won't we Poll?"

"You bet!" answered Poll, looking lazily up from the grass where she was dozing.

With the approach of night, the sky grew fairly inky black, and it was evident that a terrible mountain storm was coming.

The lightning began to play in zig-zags, across the heavens, and the thunder rolled loud and strong enough to shake the very earth.

"I allow we're about to have a spell of weather," observed Pete Parrot, "and if there is any of you galoots who hasn't made himself solid, up above, I'd advise ye to hustle, fer ther's no tellin' but what this is the end."

"I reckon you've got about as much occasion to square up accounts, as any of us," opined Mose.

"Oh! Poll and I are all right," assured Pete. "We intend to go straight up on the through route, and not even have to be bothered by the conductor—don't we Poll?"

"You bet," croaked Poll.

It soon began to rain, a sudden outburst; not a shower, but it simply came down in torrents.

The trees afforded but little protection and the party were soon drenched.

Shortly after the rain began, Mose missed Hood.

The gambler had slid away in the darkness.

"Well, you can bet he's off to get his work in ahead of us!" assured Pete. "Ef he does, he orter be hung, himself. Sam Parrot is my game, ef any one's, considerin' that he has had heaps of fun at the expense of my neck, besides robbin' me of my fortune. I say I orter to have first show, eh? What d'ye say, Moses?"

"Well, I don't know but you're right," assented Mose.

"Great hump-lacked hornets, don't I know I am right? Even Poll kin swear to that. Neow, ef that feller goes and kills Sam, without givin' me a show, I call et darned mean. Don't you, Poll?"

"Darned mean!" echoed Poll, struggling to her feet, and shaking the rain from her feathers.

Not long after the rain set in, moving twinkling lights were seen in the direction of the ore-breakers, appearing like stars, through the rain.

"Ah! the miners are coming from work," said Mose. "We will soon be able to make a move on the enemy, providing he is in the mine, which I begin to doubt."

"What is the cause of your doubts?" inquired Bradford.

"The prolonged absence of Hill."

"You don't suspect him?"

"Sorry to say I am beginning to get suspicious."

"Why so? Hasn't Hill accompanied us all the way here?"

"True; but, might not it be a put-up job? Might not this whole trip been a scheme to throw us off the track, to give the Honorable Samuel a chance to evade pursuit? Especially the trip here, from Virginia City."

"Well, such a thing is possible."

"Quite so. I wouldn't be much afraid to bet they didn't come this way at all."

"Waal, we won't find 'em by stayin' heer, you bet. So let's get a move on us," said Pete Parrot.

A start was then made.

The rain continued to pour down; it was almost impossible to fight against it.

It seemed as if the eave-spouts of heaven must have opened to create another flood.

The distance from where the party had been stopping to the ore-breaker, was about a thousand yards.

To reach the mill, the party had to pass directly through the camp, or else make a wide detour which, in this pelting rain, was out of the question.

So, as stealthily as possible, they stole through the camp.

There were lights in all the windows, and sounds indicated that Burke's saloon was doing a rattling business.

But, there was no one out of doors to play spy on Mose or his companions, so they reached the mill without discovery.

The mill, or breaker, was a huge barn of a building. When built the projector of the enterprise must have had sanguine expectations for the future of the place or else had been demented, for the building was ten times too large.

"Thet aire a ruther gruesome lookin' shebang!" observed Pete, as the party paused before it. "Looks to me as ef et might be a purty lively place for supernatteral human bein's."

"That's a new species, ain't it?" asked Magic Mose.

"No, not much. I saw 'em when I had the jims,—women with white nightgowns, an' men what was grinnin' skeletons, an' Satan with his pitchfork."

"Sure you didn't see any anacondas, or boa constrictors?"

"Nary one! But, I saw dogs, cats, rats, sheep, cows, goats, pigs, horses, and—but, say: what are we goin' to do for a light?"

"I have one," said Bradford—"a small pocket lantern that I brought with me from the gulch."

"Good! light it!"

This was done, and the party entered the huge building.

All was silence. A watchman sat dozing on a box.

To pounce upon and secure him, was the matter of but a few seconds.

"Now, my man," said Mose, after the man was a prisoner, "ef you know when your skull is safe, tell us where we will find Sage. It is the only thing that will save it."

"Down there," answered the miner, and he pointed to the shaft.

"Are he and his family down there?"

"Yes."

"No, they are not!"

It was a woman's voice that spoke, and wheeling, the party beheld Hazel Hood!

"They're all dead!" she said. "My own father came to me, and told the whole dreadful story. The man named Hill had been killed shortly before. Pa than got into an altercation with Sage, and a fight followed. My step-mother fled, but I staid, and when I saw that the two men had fought to the death I climbed up the shaft rope. So here now, Burt, I am!"

There is but little to add, to complete this story.

Bradford, of course, married Hazel.

The bodies of Hood, Hill and his wife were buried near the spot where they met their fate.

As for Magic Mose, and Pete and Poll, they struck out into New Mexico where we may see them again.

THE END.

Up a Tree;

OR,

Deadwood Dick's Leap for Life.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER.

"Oh! yes, I can give ye a few p'ints about Deadwood Dick, the modern Claude Duval of the Black Hills, ef that's what you're a-hankerin' arter!" said old Kit Feltus, the Bozeman ex-constable, who came in with us on the stage to Deadwood. "Why, sir-rh, that feller ar' one o' the scaliest galoots as ever breathed atmosphere, or I'm an author o' falsehoods.

"Ye see, I've had a right smart good bit o' expeeryence in thes 'ere part o' the foot-stool, an' hev had transactions wi' sum o' the worst ye can skeer up, but young Harris, or Deadwood Dick, beats 'em all. It's wonderful, sir-rh, how the young galoot can do et, but et ar' morally sart'in thet no matter in how tight a place he gits cornered, he's bound to git free.

"About a month ago, I war down this way, lookin' up a claim fer a Bozeman party, when who should I fall in wi' but old Roxly, frum the city. He ar' chief o' the Regulators thar, now, an' he had a passel o' his gang along with him—fine fightin'-cocks they war, too.

"Of course, bein' 's Roxly an' I war old pals, we stopped fer a chat, and he said as he war after Deadwood Dick—war right sure o' his game, an' all he had to do war bag it, which, I allow, war a purty confydent assertion, bein' 's Richard warn't the bird to be easily caught in a net. I sed I war afraid they'd get their own necks inter a slippin'-noose afore they got his'n thar, an' war about to ride off, when Rox proposed that I shed accompany 'ein, an' share the reward-money, ter which I war agreeable, fer 'twould be a heap more'n I war to git from the Bozeman chaps.

"So I sot out along wi' the Regulators.

"Somehow or other Roxly had got wind that Harris war upon the Bozeman trail, whar his young wife war keepin' toll-gate—an' a right purty piece she ar', too, ef I do say et, though I don't often brag o' female beauty, fer, ye see, I've got one of the ugliest critters fer a wife this side of Egypt.

"So we made fer the toll-gate, though we hedn't no idea which one Mrs. Deadwood Dick lived in, 'ca'se, you see, thar ar' nigh about a score atwixt Deadwood an' Bozeman—or, ruther, 'twixt Crook City an' Deadwood, fer Crook ar' this side o' Bozeman. So nothin' war left but ter visit 'em all, till we come to the right one.

"Their fu'st one weren't the one we wanted, neither was the second nor the third, but the fourth smelt suspiciously o' game, and we concluded it war the residence o' Mrs. Dicky. We didn't ride inside o' the gate—oh! no; we just halted back behind a curve in the road, an' held a war-confab, ter decide w'at war best to do.

"Ther gate stood facin' the trail—that ar', the shanty o' the keeper did, while a pair o' bars constituted the gate in question, an' it war ruleable ter fork over 'two bits,' in order ter git a passage through; though thar's sum galoots as will ride over top o' the mountains ruther'n to pay the toll. On each side o' the trail, at this point, the mountains rolled up to a great height, and were covered frum the base half-way up, wi' pine wood. After that et war all rocks and bushes.

"I'm durned positive Deadwood Dick's in thet shanty!" old Rox sed, peering around the curve toward the gate, 'an' ef he be, we're a-goin' to have him, bet yer chips.'

"I told him that et war my opinion as he were correct; then we decided upon a course o' action. I war to ride on alone, pass through the gate, an' use my optics to the best possible advantage. Ef I see'd ennything o' road-agent Richard. I shed fire off my revolver, w'ich would fetch the boys to my assistance.

"I didn't keer so much about goin' as sum might, fer onc't before I hed seen Harris put a lead pellet inter a feller's cranium for meddlin' wi' his bizness; but I ain't no coward to be bluffed off, so I sot out, feelin' a little narvous, though I tried hard ter look as brave's a lion.

"I don't keer how stiff stuff a feller's made, uv, when he goes before a man as holds life of as leetle value as Deadwood Dick, he's apt to git sumwhat flustered an' shaky. Howsumever, I rid straight up to ther bars, an' sung out lustily fer a pass. Out came the keeper, an'—oh! Crimminy! warn't she a snorter? Jes' s purty as ary sunflower ye ever sot eyes on, an' she hed a sassy tongue, too, fer she said, said she:

"Ye needn't yell so, you old galoot; I heard ye comin' afore ye got in sight."

"Dry up," sez I; "I'll yell as much as I please, ef this hyer court knows herself, an' it ar' morally an' religiously sart'in she do."

"Then I give a squint inter ther shanty, while she was countin' out the change. Lordy! I'll bet this hyer plug o' Ruffian Ready, pilgrim, thet my heart jumped cl'ar to my tinpanem at what I see'd."

"Thar, sittin' in thet ar' shanty, tipped back on a chair, wi' a cigar in his mouth an' his heels onto top o' the bureau, war ther very identical black mask, black suit an' all.

"Heavings! it made my very veins tingle to gaze at the chap, an' realize that he were so near, an' yit so fur.

"Nothin' sez I, but arter I got my change, I galloped on thru' the gate as ef nuthen' hed happened. When about half-a-mile further on, I drew my pill-box an' let blaze away at a lively rate. Then I heerd an answerin' report frum Roxly, an' so I rid back fer ther gate, bound ter see the fun.

"But, stranger, as I remarked once before, no matter how tight a place ye git him cor-

nered in, Deadwood Dick's sure ter escape; an' so et war, eventually in this case.

"He tuk my pistol-shot ter be a signal o' danger fer him, an' out he skedaddled across the gulch toward the mountains. Did he run, you ask? Waal, now, he *did*, ef this hyer jury agree, an' she thinks she do. *Run?*—waal, ef he didn't no one ever did. He just got over Teddy Firmy, two-forty on the hum stretch; an' the way he raised a dust, ye'd a thort et war a reg'lair simoon on ther Desert o' Sara.

"Rox and his gang spied him about the same time I did, an' we all sot out in hot pursuit, a-yellin' fer him to slack up, or we'd perforate him. But no attention he paid—not muchly! He war desprity determined to escape, an' ther way he showed us his heels war sublimely beautiful—darned 'f 'twarn't.

"Up among the foot-hills he bounded, an' on up the wooded mountain-side, an' we yellin' at his rear, fer we hed abandoned the hosses, and were a-measurin' our paces ag'in' his'n. But 'twarn't no use—he war bound to keep ahead.

"Let him continy on!" puffed Old Rox, as we toiled up ther steep ascent. "I jedge I kno' su'thin' he don't. T'other side o' this mountin' he can't descend, 'ca'se et ar' a sheer precipice—a rift between two peaks, more'n a thous'n' feet deep. When he gits ter the top his goose is cooked."

"On we went as fast as our legs would carry us, and soon we emerged frum the heavy timber inter ther wilderness o' rock an' bushes. Far above us war Deadwood Dick, trottin' steadily along, evidently pretty well fagged, but, sir-rh—I'll say et fer the boyee—*determined to stick to the ship as long as thar was bottom!*

"We could now see the summit, and upon it was a huge, densely-branched pine tree, tottering on the very edge of the abyss, where it had grown and perhaps withstood the stornis of a century.

"I'll tell ye w'at!" Old Rox cried, as we saw the young road-robbler gain ther end of his up hill journey, 'ther galoot's a-goin' ter shin thet 'ar tree, or I'm an antiquated mule. I reckon he thinks ter hold us at bay, consarn his black pictur. Look at that, will ye?"

"He pointed upward to where the young cuss had halted an' war shakin' o' his black-gloved fist at us, in defiance, wile his orful laugh made the mountains ring.

"Draw a bead on ther devil!" roared old Roxy, fuming wi' rage. "Ah! ye black imp o' Satan, ye ar' a goner now!"

"Several shots were fired, but they all struck short o' their mark, and Deadwood Dick only larfed the louder. But when he see'd we war gittin' clusser, he turned an' shinned up the tree like a young monkey—better'n ary one o' our crowd ked do, fer thar war no branches till fifteen feet frum ground.

"Waal, ter cut a long story short, we camped down at ther foot o' ther tree, wi' ther intention o' starvin' out our game—but, bah! what's the use o' botherin' arter 'em as is leagued wi' the Old Nick?"

"While we war eatin' our supper, an' little dreamin' o' sich a thing, our prize slipped right through our fingers.

"Ye see ther big pine leaned out quite er ways over the rift, which war at least seventy feet wide, an' the Lord only knows how fur et war ter the bottom.

"Waal, sir-rh, Deadwood Dick sot ter work an' manufactured a trapeze out o' his his lasso, an' fastenin' et ter an outstretchin' limb, whar et hed plenty o' free swing, he climb down inter et, ready fer bizness—hang me ef he didn't.

"And, pilgrim, ther fu'st warnin' we hed o' it war when, on' lookin' up, on his givin' a' fearful yell, we see'd the young devil shoot out frum ther swayin' trapeze, an' go

plowing like a meteor thru' mid-air, directly over thet yawnin' rift.

"I reckon a howl o' genuine horror es- caped every man o' our crowd, as we beheld ther road-agent's fearful life leap; it seems to me I can even now see him crossing thet frightful rift.

"How we held our breaths, an' gazed in terrible fascination, expecting ter see him go down! down! down inter thet black bot-tomless pit!"

Here Old Kit paused; his eyes were star-ing; it seemed as if he were living over again that fearful moment.

"Well, did he go down?" was asked, be-tween the jolts of the noisy stage.

"Nary a go down," with a shiver.

"Sir-rh! mebbe ye won't b'lieve et, but thet same Deadwood Dick cleared thet abyss—seventy feet, or over—an' landed on a rocky plateau, on t'other side. Then, before we could cover him wi' our rifles, he sent back one o' them taunting, demoniac laughs, and plunged out of sight inter ther timber.

"Et war a mighty leap—but, then, pil-grim, Dick's had adventures as would lay that 'way in the shade—fact!"

"And as long as he dodges Judge Lynch's noose he's bound to be heard from—bet yer pile on thet!"

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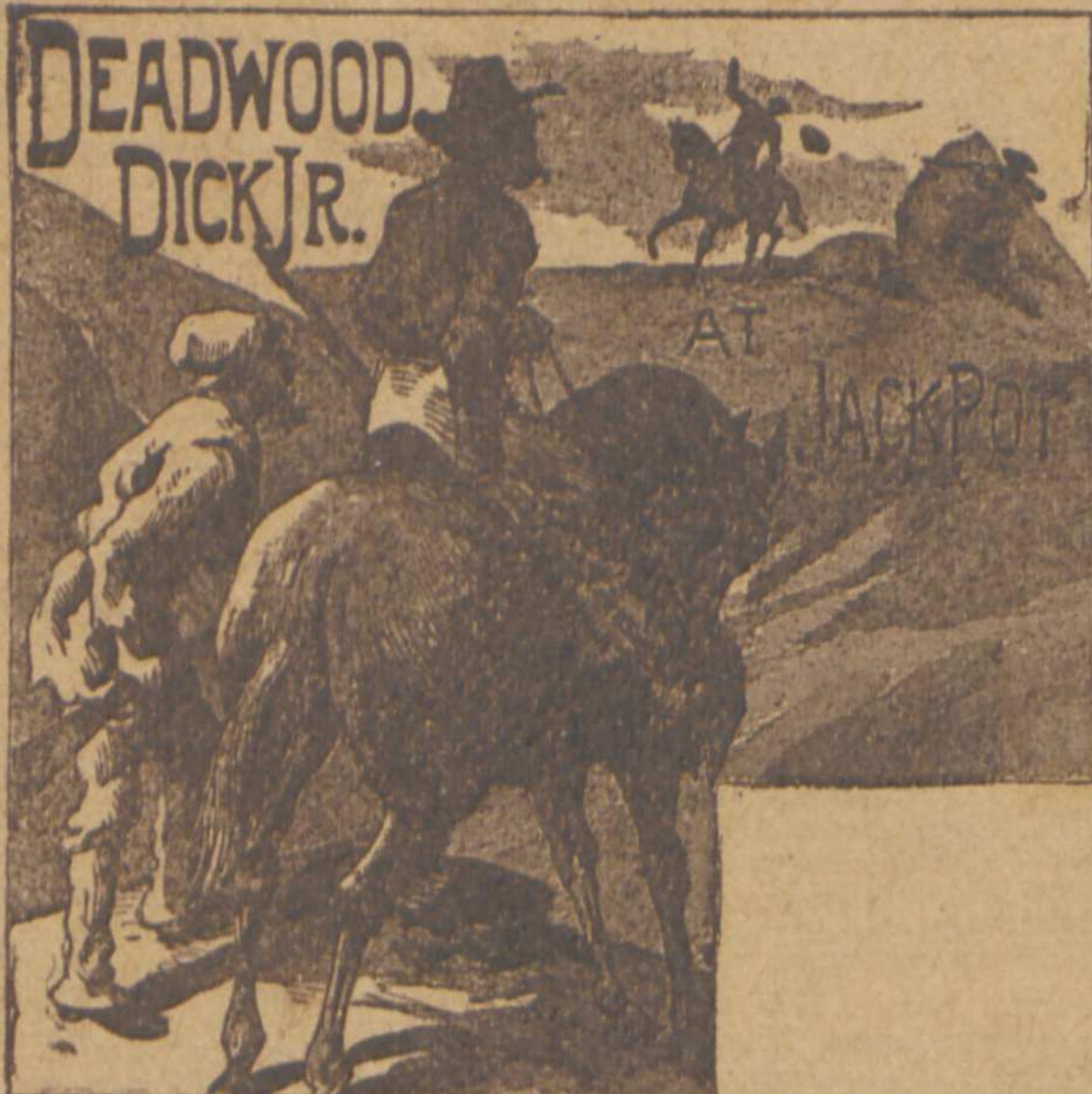
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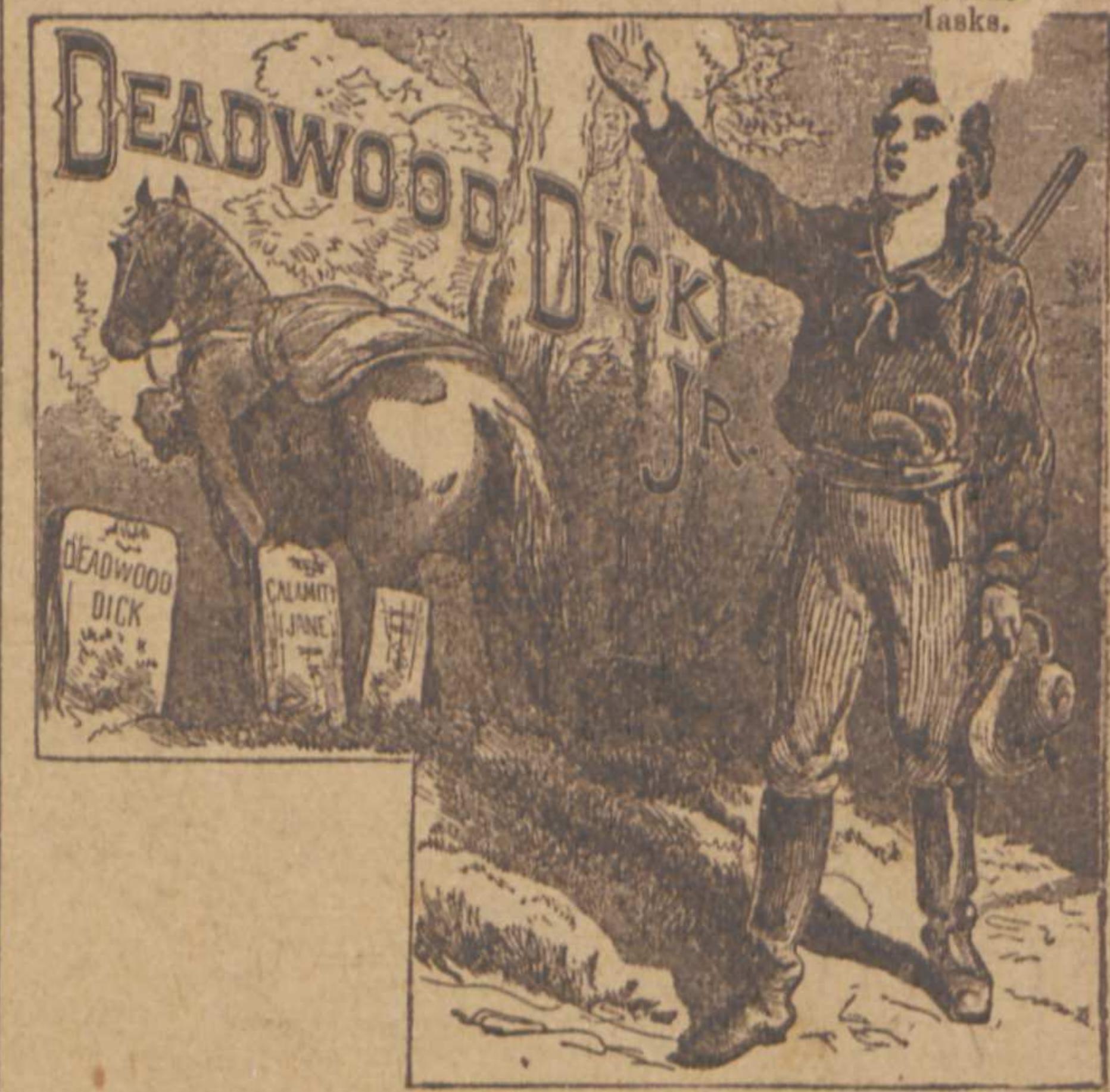
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